

THE
MISTAKE:

OR,

SOMETHING BEYOND A JOKE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

By P. LITTLEJOHN,
AUTHOR OF HENRY AND THE CIPHER.

Res est solliciti plena timoris amor.

OVID.

VOL. I.

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PREFACE

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PREFACE.

AT a period like the present, when the pen of fiction swells the novel volume with the romantic blandishments and superstitious imagery collected from the wild notions entertained in ages long past ; or, in strict conformity with the new-fangled doctrine propagated by the admirers of some recent translations, whose moral tendency may be doubted, forms its diction from materials that flatter the weakness of human nature, the author of

the following Work neither cherishes the hope of arresting the attention, or of securing the approbation of the general mass of readers, in favor of a tale, whose prominent features are, at least, sanctioned by probability, and bear so close a connection with the actual occurrences that continually happen in real life, as to be totally destitute of all those attractive and inexplicable ingredients that catch the credulous by surprise, and, at once, overpowering the dictates of sober reason and reflection, hurry the imagination, amidst the whirlwind of supernatural agency and fear, till every rational idea is

lost

lost in the vortex of plausible absurdity. From the few, however, who consider the incidents that, in reality, take place on the great theatre of mortal existence, as fully adequate not only to furnish amusement in the recitation, but even the necessary examples for the management of the passions, and who, in despite of the present fashionable and opposite opinion, still maintain that virtue is the surest road to the attainment of complete and permanent happiness; what is now offered for their inspection, if it fails in procuring actual commendation, will, at least, obtain a candid perusal.

When

When the almost innumerable quantity of publications, of a similar complexion, with which the press has teemed for the last half century are considered, to assert that the present contains any thing which may be literally termed *new*, would be offering a rude piece of injustice to the memory and discernment of the most superficial examiner; but that any portion of the contents are borrowed intentionally from any former production, the author, in justice to himself, positively denies; nay, he might add, though not without the dread of contradiction, that some of the best scenes have been grievously

PREFACE.

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ously marr'd, merely because too great a familiarity subsisted between them and the effusion of some other writers, to whose very existence he was a stranger previous to his original composition.

The characters, to constitute this drama, boast not of originality, nor are they, perhaps, so dexterously managed as some more skilful *mechanics* in the art of compilation might have done; but such as they are, it is hoped, the obvious contrast subsisting betwixt the whole will form that moral lesson which ought to be at all times the motive for writing works
of

of invention ; at all events, having no literary fame to support, the censure or disapprobation that may ensue will fall with the less ponderosity on the head of the author ; whilst, on the contrary, the most trifling portion of praise, accruing from the labours of an obscure individual, will come to him with a double portion of gratification, because unexpected. With such confined expectations, either from the contempt or flattery of popular opinion, the *Mistake* is thrown on the world, unprefaced by the adulation of friends, unprotected by the influence of patronage :—if its success is tolerable, it
may

may turn out a *good joke* to the author; but if, like many other productions of more sterling merit, it is condemned to moulder on the solitary shelf in sad oblivion,—to him it will prove *something beyond one*.

may find it a good idea to do so.

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to the mind, and to the feelings, and to the passions, and to the faculties, and to the powers, and to the organs, and to the system, and to the whole.

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handsome person had previously strength-

ened the natural bent of inclination; and

governed the natural bent of inclination; and

voice of propriety had been silenced, by

the loud language of voluptuous grati-

BY the sudden decease of an over in-

dulgent parent, the Earl of Wellford,

came to the unrestrained possession of an

unincumbered fortune, at a period too

juvenile for him either to have imbibed

the necessary principles for the economi-

cal management of his passions, or, to

have

have derived the common lessons that present themselves from worldly experience for the proper conducting a charge so momentous; on the contrary, a gay and profuse liberality of sentiment, joined to the insinuating self-knowledge of a handsome person, had previously strengthened the natural bent of inclination; and, governed only by his own will, the feeble voice of propriety had been silenced, by the loud language of voluptuous gratification and excess.

The advice of relations, aided by a propensity for variety, soon after led him into the state of matrimony; but the heart being a bauble, which neither the rage of fashion, or his own penetration, pointed
out

put as necessary to be consulted on this occasion, a short trial satiated him of those domestic endearments, which the approbation of that heart would have rendered permanent and pleasing.—The round of ceremonious visits that, in consequence of his marriage, ensued, pleased for the moment; but the gay frivolity of fashionable etiquette palls on repetition; and sunk in a few weeks to the unnoticed Benedick, his Lordship's thoughts turned in search of that happiness which his home furnished not, nor, indeed, the nature of his pursuits allowed elsewhere attainable. His extravagance only increased with his want of success; and his hours were past in a giddy round of fashionable intemperance,

rance, till the tender incitations of a husband became lost in the conflux.

Different, indeed, had been the education of Lady Wellford; and different were the disposition, the conduct, and behaviour, she maintained. The ambition of a father had literally bartered her happiness for the high sounding honour of a title, and cruelly sacrificed the very object, for which his days had been spent in industry, and his nights in anxious solicitude.—Possessed of beauty, and every correspondent accomplishment, and of a magnet too that had, in the first instance, engaged the notice of her Lord; namely, a fortune adequate to the rank to which she was lifted; a necessary portion of self-consequence

consequence and laudable pride, might still have secured her tranquillity; or at least have meliorated the unkind temper of her husband; but she was mild and pliable to a fault; she suffered, therefore, without complaint, nor strove to impede the fierce current of his folly, till the stream had gained a rapidity, that set every after attempt to interrupt, or even to regulate its course, at defiance.

In this state of matrimonial unhappiness, two sons were born. The eldest, from an early propensity for mischievous amusements, joined to a spirit, superior to bodily chastisement, secured all the father's fondness; whilst the youngest, heir to all his mother's meekness and sensibi-

lity, soon became the darling object of Lady Wellford's partiality: these different baiffes, therefore, instead of again linking together the chain of mutual harmony, only tended to widen the chasm of family dissatisfaction. The world, either from an absolute want of candor, or from that careless lassitude that often incites a decision without the trouble of a nice investigation, became umpire in this conubial warfare, and, in consequence, Lady Wellford became, not only the but of high bred ridicule, but was uncandidly censured as the sole cause of his Lordship's errors and infidelity. A reproach, equally unjust and barbarous, at last determined the Countess to retire from the malignity of circles, into which she had entered

entered with reluctance, and partook of their sweets without relish or enjoyment. The consent of the Earl, in this particular, ran even before her sollicitation; he was pleased to be thus freed from what he still termed an incumbrance on his mode of life, without subjecting himself to the harshness of a first proposal; and permitted her to depart with all the sang-froid of the most refined modern husband; nor did his politeness and consideration stop here; he gave immediate orders that the house, to which she was about to retire, (and which, indeed, had been made her own by marriage settlement) should be put in a sumptuous state of repair, and what was of infinite more importance to her Ladyship, allowed her

the company of her favourite boy, to soften the harshness of seclusion and solitude, and render those hours pleasing, which dull reflection would otherwise have rendered melancholy and languid.

Had the disposition of the children, concorded by nature, the distinguishable difference that now took place, both in example and situation, would have gradually bent their infantile minds to opposite points; but as even dame nature's self had concurred in the dissimilarity, that dissimilarity now encreased with two-fold avidity.

Lord Southby, the senior boy, tutored by those whose interest it was to submit
to,

to, and even to encourage, the most unpropitious productions of his genius or humour, had in course, received no salutary check to curb the extravagant impetuosity of his temper; the absurd fondness of his father, enveloped all that care and attention arising from paternal solicitude, and the force of example, and the precepts imbibed from the conversation of loose visitants, proved to a mind, deprived of a proper bias, equally fascinating and pernicious; from an unpardonable indulgence too, a familiar intercourse with even the lowest class of menials, gave to his manner and discourse a vulgarness, and to his actions a littleness, unworthy the rank he held in society; in his disposition there was a discriminating

trait too, which in infancy he conceived and tenaciously adhered to, and this was a violent propensity to singularity. He scorned to do any thing of consequence like any body else:—not that the youthful nobleman made this peculiarly a study, for it would be doing infinite injustice to his mode of reasoning, to suppose he ever discomposed the general brilliancy of his faculties, with study of any kind:—no, it was merely a kind of systematic disapprobation of the actions of other people, which led him into a continual opposition in the management of his own; whether right or wrong were trifles, infinitely beneath his notice or attention; but as this strange symptom of eccentricity will gradually expand itself in the course

course of these equally eccentric memoirs, it is only necessary now to say, that he grew up, unadorned by the blandishments of good breeding; unpolished by travel; and uncultivated by the still more useful and important hand of education, in consequence, his pursuits were constantly marked with folly and inconsideration, and, but too often, distinguished by evident criminality.

Far removed from the deluding examples of the metropolis, and under the tender and assiduous tuition of a mother, Edmund, the junior child, had early imbibed those principles of rectitude which in riper years conspicuously expanded their attracting blossoms; a constant president

of virtue and goodness, anxiously set before him, formed his disposition in a congenial familiarity; and carefully instructed to distinguish between ignorance and its opposite, his mind became enlightened by a gentle graduation. To be solicitous to obtain knowledge, he found, was absolutely to obtain it, and when obtained, the intellectual system forms superior to the groveling machinations of evil, and cherishes all those perfections that render human nature lovely and even angelic. Indeed, this youth, had a thirst for learning, which no impediment could quench; he possessed too a generosity which did ample justice to the acuteness of his feelings, and a sincerity of conduct, which no vicissitude had power to alter. From habitude, he
had

had adopted a maternal softness of manner, which tho' it rendered him less fit to push through a world so differently characterized in general, yet held him up the object of endearment to those few, whose sensibility was consonant with his own, and whose respect for a fellow creature was not lessened by a sense of that creature's excellence.

The love a fond mother entertained for this deserving youth, even encreased with his years, and it was returned by every possible testimony of filial gratitude and unremitting attention. The period of his necessary absence in the prosecution of his studies, was only rendered to her tolerable, by the fond hope of his return to Wellford

Lodge,

Lodge, where, amidst a circumscribed circle of real friends, all thoughts of a disagreeable tendency vanished.

In this circle the Earl of Wellford had never mingled; his ideas of life, held a wider field for the range of his pursuits; he despised every kind of solitude, and, indeed, looked with contempt on every species of amusement that diffused itself without the verge of the metropolis. His favourite son too followed, in this particular, his example, as far as the whimsicality of his temper admitted, and but with the exception of his having once or twice drove down to the country, merely because he knew every body else was coming to town, and passed a few days at the Lodge,

his

his mother, or brother, had little reason to admire his attention. In fact, no two families could live more distinct, for notwithstanding Edmund had frequently addressed his father by letter, and had still more frequently solicited the intercession of his brother, in order that a reconciliation and happy intercourse might be restored, the Earl remained inflexibly silent, and Lord Southby seldom wrote letters, it was a practice so common, particularly in reply to a brother, which he *swore* every blockhead occasionally performed, still, in despite of these harsh impediments, a kind of communication was preserved, in regard to the common occurrences that took place, and that through the medium of a young gentleman, who long had stood on a footing of friendship

friendship and familiarity with all, and who apparently felt himself all the satisfaction his communications conferred on others ; and, altho' by a cast of subtilty, peculiarly his own, he often substituted fiction in lieu of reality, the esteem he was held in had never suffered by such want of candour, nor the intelligence conveyed suffered from their want of authenticity.

As this gentleman will make some figure in the following work, it is deemed necessary previously to convey to the reader a few disagreeable truths in order to the attaining a right conception of his character.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

A Modern Friend.

CAPTAIN FAIRFAX, the gentleman of whom we now speak, was born with well-grounded hopes of future independence; and educated with correspondent liberality; his ideas, in consequence, were but ill calculated to submit to a sudden reverse of fortune; yet this reverse, the rash conduct of a parent, had made him experience in all its bitterness and poignancy;—a single game at cards, having involved himself and his family in all the horrors

horrors of poverty and want, without even holding out the most distant prospect of a retrieval. Galled by the pressure of this vicissitude, and unable to lower his ideas on a level with his reduced circumstances, he gave way to the baneful suggestions of his pride, and it became, in his opinion, a piece of common justice, to turn the superior abilities he possessed to his own immediate advantage.

The paths of rectitude he quitted; interest became his object, and the little checks, which conscience occasionally threw in the way, were so effectually opposed by his favourite plea of necessity, that they became at last subservient to his new received principles. The change,
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at least, appeared to him a wise one, because it supported a continuance in the gay world; and it carried with it the pleasing reflection, that the extravagances, he continued to indulge, were now supported by his own ingenuity and deception.

From a claim of distant relationship, he had early become acquainted in the Wellford family:—indeed, the Earl had been one of those, that without a single impulsive throw of regret, shared in the profits arising from the ruin of the Captain's paternal inheritance;—his friendship, on this account, became a kind of obligation, whilst that of Fairfax, mingled with a retributive quality, gave a palliative

liative to every species of art and finesse. On the Earl himself, deeply versed as he was in modern refinement and address, a subtilty was necessary to outwit his vigilance, which rendered the Captain's success attended with too much trouble, to be often practised; but on the younger branches, his machinations were frequent, because easy in their accomplishments.

No two youths, as has been previously stated, differed more essentially, than did Lord Southby and his brother Edmund, yet by a cunning mode of flattering their predominant foibles, the captain had ingratiated himself into their respective good graces, and secured, in consequence, their warmest

warmest attachment. Lord Southby was a youth, who, amidst a strange medley of arrogance, meanness, pride, and humility, commanded not one grain of that penetration necessary to prevent the pernicious attacks of interested duplicity, and a more than common portion of self conceit and adulation, continually exposed him to the attacks of one whose interest it was to administer to such prevalent folly.—On Edmund, his artifice was of a different complexion; this young man's goodness of heart seldom permitted prudence, or even circumspection, to curb his liberality; with him, therefore, Fairfax's chief study was to point out imaginary objects of commiseration, and by procuring himself the appointment of almoner, often made his

his own pocket the repository of donations resulting from the purest motives of feeling and charity.

The interest of Lord Wellford, had advanced him to the command of a company in a marching regiment, and his advice had induced the same nobleman, to procure for Edmund an ensigncy in the same corps ;—this advice was not however, the result of love or respect, for these were virtues with which he had little communication. He well knew with how much liberality the pecuniary funds of the young officer, were supplied by a fond mother, and knowing also that her death, happen when it would, would render her favourite independant on the score of fortune,

fortune, he had laid the plan, with the view of having that favourite under his own immediate control and direction.

Thus insincere in friendship, his gallantry was as little praise-worthy.—No officer in the regiment, possessed a more elegant personal appearance,—or a volubility of conversation equally befitting his outward attractions ;—but his love, if it might be termed so, was of that sordid cast, which only tends towards the gratification of the grosser senses, without touching those finer feelings which ought to form its basis ; notwithstanding this he had married, and an outward show of tenderness and attention seemed to prognosticate that genuine affection was mutually concerned.

Mrs.

Mrs. Fairfax was the daughter of an opulent city tradesman; in her education, no perceptive suggestion interfered to curb those notions of grandeur which riches gave rise to, and the consequence soon pointed out the impropriety. In infancy, she had been betrothed to the son of an equally wealthy neighbour, but bred a fine lady, her notions soared beyond the confines of Garlick-hill, and rose in opposition to parental advice or admonition; she saw at the Opera Captain Fairfax.—His figure, address, and showy situation, far outstript the humble attractions of her intended husband, whilst her fortune equally preponderating on the humour of Fairfax, soon brought about an explanation, that ended in a trip to *Gretna Green*. This step

was

was not in the event attended with the flattering success the captain had supposed, the father of his wife, not only offended at a step so much against his inclinations, became at once careless and indolent, he entered into speculative projects, which ended in the ruin of his circumstances, and soon after dying, his effects went to satisfy his creditors ;—thus ended the hopes of our officer on that score ; the sum he had obtained in the first instance was squandered in dissipation, and he was again reduced to the necessity of practising his usual modes of recourse.

His wife, who had shared in this short-lived prosperity, and had indeed contributed her share towards its sudden com-

pletion, bore up against the event with even more than her husband's fortitude. On her side love was predominant, to it she had sacrificed her friends and all her prior prospects in life, and by its influences she was enabled to bear up against the ebb of fortune without repining;—the knowledge of her husband's profligacy had not the power to obliterate her affections;—all his actions she viewed through the medium of partiality, till, by the too frequent familiarity with the ways of vice, her heart in strict consonance with that of the man she adored, formed a callosity, on which, at last, the occurrences of the world past without impression.

Tho' the Captain was too deep a politician to impart an implicit confidence, yet
in

in this lady he found so steady an adviser, that in her he reposed his principal schemes, and notwithstanding the quickness of his own invention seldom required secondary aid, yet often did he find her interference so requisite in the modification of his designs, that without it, disgrace to both would infallibly have ensued.

From this short sketch, our readers may form some idea of a man, who, for a considerable length of time, held a conspicuous place in the gay circles, and to whose talents for deception, the following history is eminently indebted: leave we him therefore for the present, and proceed to a recital of our history, of which, the previous part may be considered as an introduction.

CHAP. III.

An Interesting Discovery.

EDMUND had but a short time joined his regiment, in consequence of the before mentioned purchase, when a letter from Wellford Lodge, announced to him the dangerous illness of his mother ;—long had an anxiety, created by the ungenerous conduct of a husband, preyed on a constitution naturally delicate, and a gradual decay of health, became at last too apparent, either to be concealed by herself, or doubted by her attendants. Physical assistance was

now

now called, but the consumption that had long lurked, now baffled every attempt to stop its progress, and that crisis fast approached, that threatened to her friends a fatal—to herself a happy—termination to all inquietude.

The young officer returned immediately, but his presence, so ardently wished for by lady Wellford, produced no alleviation in the rapid decline of her health:—tho' it furnished that tranquil serenity to the mind, that fortifies it against the fears of dissolution, and braces the senses to sustain with fortitude, mortality's last change.

In the unfeigned testimony of sorrow bestowed by Edmund on this occasion, he

was cordially joined by the sympathy of a young lady, whom he had long looked on in the endearing connection of a sister; placed in this situation by the kind adoption of the Countess, and whose dutiful and assiduous attention, had long secured the next place to himself, in his mother's love. Her name was Charlotte, reared from childhood under the immediate care of Lady Wellford, and the story of whose birth and introduction, was simply understood to be:—that she was, merely, an object of charity, taken from parents, whose extreme necessitous circumstances rendered this sacrifice to their feelings a merit;—that death soon after snatched them from a world in which they had been doomed to taste so much penury, and no enquiry

enquiry having, for a considerable space afterwards, been made after any of their relatives, it became at last impossible to trace them out. Few doubted the truth of this story, because few were interested in the transaction; and Charlotte grew up the pupil of her benefactress, the counterpart of her worth, and the strict imitator of her virtues.

Edmund and Charlotte had been playmates in early infancy, the first rudiments of education they received together, and the direction and sole management of their tempers being under the same authority, they became distinguishable only by a consonance and uniformity; such a connection, founded on infantile purity, and

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strengthened

strengthened by gradual ties of fellowship and esteem, formed itself unfortunately to a passion superior to the limited friendship of associates. They dreaded no fatal consequence from this termination, innocent and tranquil in themselves, they tasted the pleasure of the *present* moment, without either dreading or being flattered by the approach of the *future*. The first time that the real situation of their hearts became apparent to themselves, was the moment in which Edmund bade adieu to the rural simplicity of Wellford Lodge, to mingle in the gay circles of a military life; fain would they have persuaded themselves, that the mutual tear that started on that occasion, was but the tribute of separating friendship; or, that the sigh that escaped, was
but

but the superficial testimony of esteem, the effects of which a few weeks or days would obliterate. The tear, they found, was the efficient moisture that washed the memory clear from every other but the object that occasioned it; and the sigh was the breathing of a long collected uneasiness, that now burst from its repository, and drove peace from the bosom.

The mournful occasion of their present meeting, far from weakening the tenderness of the passion with which they were previously inspired, furnished it only with a cast of superior delicacy and refinement. They were no longer the sportive companions that wont to communicate their thoughts without reserve, and pass their

hours in obliging one another without studying how, or even knowing they did so ; their conversation was now marked with formality, and their anxiety to please but served to mar its own intention.

The Countess could not help observing this change, and when too late, perceived the unpropitious effects of her own conduct. Little acquainted with the genuine purity of love, her own affection for a husband had been the result of duty, and the return made to it, scarcely deserving so cold a term, when, therefore, she perceived the attachment of Edmund and Charlotte attended only with symptoms of gaiety and cheerfulness, she felt that satisfaction which a parent feels when their children are happy,

py, without an intervening doubt of their becoming otherwise from such an intimacy or connection ; suppressing, however, what she now felt, she determined to deal candidly, and leave the discovery she had to make, to be meliorated by the reason and circumspection of the parties.— Calling them therefore to her bed-side, she raised herself up, and addressed her son.

“ My dearest Edmund, as the time fast approaches when I must leave you, I must inform you of a circumstance which I sincerely hope will add strength to that chain of affection which I have long endeavoured to form between you and my poor Charlotte :—on her education, and in the direction of her disposition, I have bestowed

the attention of a parent, and I feel, at this moment, inexpressible satisfaction in the reflection, that my expectations have been fully gratified ;—yes Edmund ! Charlotte is every way qualified for, and every way entitled to your protection,—not only as the favourite of a mother who loves you, but from her own merits, backed by a claim of consanguinity indisputable—she is your sister.”

The hand of the Countess, which had been previously held by her son, suddenly dropt; a cold tremulous pang shook every nerve; he darted a look of mingled love and astonishment on Charlotte,—she was pale, nature had failed to aid her spirits against a surprise so unexpected, and she
dropt

dropt insensible on the floor. Edmund flew to her assistance, the presence of his mother could not restrain the tumult of alarm that seized him, he snatched his sister to his bosom, and gave vent to the tenderest expressions of anxiety ; she soon recovered, but the knowledge of their affinity had infused no portion of joy ;—“ You forget that I am now your *sister*,” cried she with a sigh—she disengaged herself from his grasp ; Edmund started at the sense conveyed by her words, and after a few minutes excruciating embarrassment, they again seated themselves. The Countess saw with extreme regret these unfavourable indications of future tranquillity, and after a pause, proceeded with difficulty.

“ Yes !

“ Yes ! my Edmund, Charlotte is your sister ; the fruit of a father’s indiscretion, and but for my interference might have been left the wretched dependant on a world’s charity ; in a sealed packet in my cabinet, you will find a short statement of this transaction ; and when you have well considered the whole, I trust my conduct on the occasion will fully meet your approbation ; at all events your sister must in you find a protector—as the conduct of a father leaves no ground to hope, that he will ever assume a part which, in so superlative a degree, ought to be his. I think I need not solicit a concurrence with my wish in this particular ; to do good, my child, is the first principle in your nature, and be assured that a diligent
discharge

discharge of duty to a sister every way so deserving, will ever prove a source of inward serenity, and the reflection of having obeyed the last injunctions of a mother, will smoothe your journey through life, and fill your last pillow with the down of comfort."

The youth wanted no such melancholy stimulative, to secure the sincerity of the protestations he now made; the Countess was pleased with their warmth,—and the tears of Charlotte drop in grateful acknowledgment, but she was silent, the endearing term of *brother* seemed beyond the power of articulation.

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The entrance of the physician dispelled, in some degree, this contention of passions, and turned the attention of the brother and sister to the agonizing contemplation of the loss they were to suffer.—The hope that had hitherto mingled with this contemplation, and mitigated its severity, now fled, and in the little space of a few hours, a parent so respected and so loved, gently breathed that sigh, that conveyed to the throne of Omnipotence a prayer for their felicity, and announced the completion of that change which mortality must suffer, whether adorned with honor, or debased by contumely.

“ We ought to support this stroke with fortitude and resignation ;” said Edmund

to

to his sister, as he gently led her from this scene of woe.—“ We ought, my Charlotte, even to rejoice, that this event has accomplished that celestial transformation that envelopes worldly sorrow, and shuts out pain and anxiety for ever,—but in grief the better sense is absorbed by a kind of selfish regret, which leads us to lament what we ourselves suffer, without considering that providence dispenses this temporary ill to us, that the perfect felicity of those we love may be completed ; most earnestly would I have you adopt this opinion, my sister, and let us mutually endeavour to shake off these melancholy taints of nature’s weakness, and wiping away the tear of filial woe, render the fable

ble dress, the only testimony of our lamentation.

“Unavailing wish!” continued he, after a pause, “first must the particles that compose the temperament of our minds be new modelled; and the recollection of past benefits done away.”

“You will soon again recover your peace of mind,” replied Charlotte, “company and conversation will gradually dispel the cloud of sorrow that now envelopes you, but my loss is indeed irreparable.—Heiress to the obloquy of paternal criminality, and marked with the opprobrious term of illegitimacy, in its most ungracious sense,—who will now stand between me and these reproaches,

reproaches, which the world inconsiderately bestows on the unhappy?—The greatest humility will not now guard me from contempt, nor a consciousness of my own rectitude be able to preserve my tranquillity. I, of all other orphans, had the smallest claim on the charity of your mother—yet but for her I must have been tutored in ignorance, and perhaps earned a livelihood amidst poverty and wretchedness; a sense of this will keep alive the sad remembrance of my loss—every thing will recal the recollection of moments happily past in the company of such a benefactress, and memory will continually draw the comparison between past joy and present sadness.”

Edmund

Edmund dried the tear that had for sometime stood quivering on his cheek, and kissing away those that plentifully fell from the eyes of his sister, bade her be comforted; he clearly saw the difference of their respective loss, and momentarily forgetting his own, he strove to soften the acuteness of his sister's by every word and symptom of tenderness and affection.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

*Some of the probable Consequences of the
Discovery.*

THE sealed packet, mentioned by the Countess previous to her decease, was an object of extreme curiosity both to Edmund and Charlotte, and they waited with the utmost anxiety the time that her ladyship's papers could be examined with propriety. A mutual trepidation seized them as the executor unfolded it, nor were its contents calculated to restore their serenity, for it contained a confirmation
of

of what in their hearts they dreaded, and stamped validity on that affinity of relationship, which ruined their prospects of happiness.—It was in substance:—

That Lady Wellford, by an anonymous letter, having learned that a child of her lord's was at nurse in a little mean cottage, in the near vicinity of London, she determined to pay an immediate visit to the cot; far from viewing the babe as an object on whom she might have in some measure revenged her husband's infidelity, she considered it as having a superior claim to her protection more especially as the fickle disposition of the father, furnished no probable hope that he would interest himself in the infant's welfare, or
even

even continue the necessary pittance for its maintenance. The taking little Charlotte under the immediate protection of the Countess, was neither countenanced nor impeded by the Earl. Lost in the whirlpool of dissipation, his feelings were estranged to genuine tenderness, and of course this act of generosity in his wife, was considered by him the mere effect of caprice, in the adjustment of which it was infinitely beneath his consequence to interfere.

Who the unfortunate mother was his lordship had always waved mentioning, though he had never advanced a doubt of his being the actual father. Lady Wellford had been indefatigable in her endeavours

yours to have this mystery explained, but without success. The nurse, in whose possession the child was found, could furnish no farther information, than that the girl had been delivered to her care by a lady, who had previously bargained with her for that purpose, but which lady had never visited her afterwards, nor had she at that time, shewn any symptoms of maternal affection.

For the sake of decency, and that the character of the parties might not suffer in the opinion of the censorious, the strictest secrecy, in regard to what concerned the Earl, was preserved; the story which has already been intimated to the reader, was given out by her ladyship in lieu of reality,
and

and time had given it every requisite probability.

“ Was I permitted by the strong evidence of my own conviction, to doubt the fair statement here before us,” exclaimed Edmund, after a deep silence, “ still might my bosom again become tranquil ;—still might a sense of Charlotte’s progressive perfections charm me into composure ; but truth, like the elementary bolt, commissioned by its electrical force to the quick destruction of some lofty spreading tree, strikes deep to the very centre of my hopes,—dries up the foliage of my fancy,—and leaves me a parched and withered ruins.”

“Why these wild observations, Edmund?” cried Charlotte, as she prest his hand to her lips,—“You are displeased perhaps that I am your sister—but indeed I will assume no importance to myself from this connection; grant me but a little portion of your friendship, and I will retire to some still more remote situation, where, far removed from the scenes in which you are destined to move, such a sister will never be mentioned to your discredit.”

“You cannot so far misconstrue the situation of my thoughts,” interrupted Edmund, quickly,—“you cannot surely, from the whole tenor of my past conduct, form a conclusion so directly opposed
to

to my real sentiments; nor, from an observance of my present anguish, can you doubt that you alone are dear to me—that you alone are the object of my tenderest solicitude?—O Charlotte!” said he, plaintively, fixing his eyes on her’s, “had providence been pleased to avert this blow;—had I still thought you less to me than a sister, still might I have cherished the hope of holding you by an affinity infinitely dearer,—an affinity, the very idea of which quickens the emotion of my heart, and struggles to dislodge those horrid forerunners of despair, that have already taken possession of my bosom.”

The wild looks of Edmund but too exactly corresponded with the melancholy

accent of his words, and a mixture of love and compassion rushed into the bosom of his sister.

No deviation from the law of truth had ever required the palliative of a fiction from the tongue of Charlotte; her heart and her language had ever been synonymous, and that moment would have produced a declaration of the tenderest attachment,—but confusion had utterly deprived her of the power of articulation. There was, however, an intelligible language in her looks, that far outwent the strongest oral testimony, and the transports of her brother stood corrected. The chord that tuned to harmony the melody of the brain, again operated, and reason
again

again re-assumed its empire. All the little endearing offices of kindness and partiality, those trivial alarms and disinterested satisfactions, that had from infancy marked the conduct of his sister towards himself, now crowded on his imagination, and convinced him by a too positive chain of facts, that a mutual passion subsisted, far beyond, in tenderness, the limited bound of consanguinity, but it convinced him also, how necessary it was to put an immediate check on the progress of so fatal a flame, that now, by its continuance, threatened misery and ruin to both.

This determination, though warranted by necessity, and sanctioned by the good sense of both, was equally severe in its

D 3.

operation,

operation, and fruitless in its effect ; the minutest action of Charlotte was blended with a something, which he in vain endeavoured to reconcile with the actions of the other females of his acquaintance ; he called her sister, and struggled to conform in manner to the placidity that generally accompanies the termination, but the perturbation that constantly attended such an address, proclaimed a name still nearer to his heart—his wish was to seclude himself from her, as much as common good breeding would allow,—to speak to her only on subjects of indifference, or at least to consult her only on matters of family import.—Yet would he catch himself hanging over her chair, whispering all those little insignificances which lovers only

only render momentous, or hastening through the rules of decorum, to break from his friends, to interrupt her walk in the solitary shade.

Charlotte now, indeed, more than ever delighted (if that could be called delight wherein no emotion of joy participated) in solitude, and avoided her brother with a caution studied and unnatural.—When in his presence, her whole attention was directed to divert his mind from the contemplation of that internal malady which visibly preyed on his external appearance. When in secret, her prayers were directed to that power, who could alone reduce to composure, one, whose happiness was superior to every consideration.

During these struggles between propriety and inclination, Edmund omitted not a strict attention to the charge that had devolved on him by the death of his mother. He had communicated the event to his father and brother, and flattered himself that a consequent visit from them, would have amicably adjusted every existing difference, but the Earl was still too much engrossed with the fashionable follies of the times, to be anywise affected by so *trivial* a circumstance as the death of a wife, and as for his brother, to have *immediately* obeyed so tender and affectionate a solicitation, would have been acting upon a principle so similar to what he supposed the writer himself would have done, that nothing *singular* would have accompanied the transaction.

A short

A short letter from the Earl, was therefore all the consolation Edmund received from relatives so near, and the grave of the Countess was bedewed with the tears of none else of her kindred, than his own and his sister's.

CHAP. V.

A Trait of Modern Ingenuity.

THE grief occasioned by the death of Lady Wellford, tho' severe, was yet of that description, that company and conversation amuses, and time moderates to that gentle kind of regret, that may be said rather to please than irritate the mind, by her demise so considerable an augmentation was made to the fortune of Edmund, that many, who before scarcely knew him by name, now eagerly sought to cultivate his

his acquaintance ; and many, who had hitherto condemned the general tenor of his conduct as effeminate foibles, were, by the force of this powerful *stimulus*, compelled to alter an opinion, conceived indeed without investigation, and hitherto maintained in direct opposition to truth.

Charlotte too, found that the goodness of her late benefactress had not terminated in her death, the opening of the will having proclaimed her perfectly independent in regard to pecuniary matters, and in course, gave her at the same time that consequence in the circle of Wellford Lodge, which independence (as it is termed) always insures to every other situation. But to herself, no self consequence was thereby

D 6 conveyed,

conveyed, her heart was the seat of virtues not to be disturbed by the blandishments of prosperity, and her inclination to do good, was not weakened by the ability to let that inclination operate.

Amidst the variety of such a new formed society, real friendship had not found its way to their residence, the visits, tho' sometimes amusing, were generally ceremonious, and consequently the effect of amusement ended with them. Edmund felt ungratified—he possessed a soul formed for friendship in its most generous sense, and he had long considered Captain Fairfax as deserving all his confidence and esteem.—To him he had therefore dispatched an express, announcing the change that had so unpropitiously

unpropitiously taken place, and conjuring him to pay an immediate visit to Wellford Lodge, where his presence was so highly necessary. This letter had found the Captain with the regiment in a distant part of the country.—A run of ill luck had sometime before drained his pockets, and even bankrupted his invention, and he had left London, his wife, and all the splendor of high life, to search for in the country that which he found impossible to obtain—namely, comfort from variety, and aid in pecuniary matters from associates, whose pockets and whose credit stood in exactly a similar situation with his own.

The unexpected intelligence now conveyed, braced up his lax ingenuity, and
threw

threw the most flattering presages into his imagination. The advantages to be derived from the open simplicity of Edmund, now possessed of independent resources, did not, indeed, require much study in their adjustment, particularly from one who had long left *honor* no kind of share in his deliberations, but the discovery of Charlotte's affinity to the Wellford family demanded all his judgment and address.

Long had Fairfax viewed the opening beauty of this young lady with stifled admiration, but perceiving at the same time the mutual attachment that subsisted between her and Edmund, he had reluctantly checked the wish that prompted him to her ruin, and cautiously concealed a passion,
the

the disclosure of which would ultimately lead to disgrace,—not that, in the event, he dreaded the resentment of his friend, but wisely considering the bosom of Charlotte to be invulnerable against any attack, however insidious, whilst prepossessed in favor of one so deserving.—This bar to his inclination was by this event taken away. Charlotte no longer allowed to cherish her first love, was left the more unguarded against the impression of a second passion. His ideas of woman being formed on the broad principle—that love was the reigning foible of all—and this passion as often governed by caprice and whim, as by solid or prudential reason.

He had promised his wife that he would speedily return to town, he well knew the impetuosity

impetuosity of her temper, and dreaded that without a speedy supply of money to keep up her extravagant career and divert her attention, the necessary absence requisite for the accomplishment of his schemes, might lead to a suspicion highly dangerous to his hopes. To Edmund, therefore, he looked for this supply, and took his measures accordingly.—Instead, therefore, of obeying the pressing injunctions of his friend, he wrote in answer to the request an excuse couched in terms so ambiguous, that he well knew would raise curiosity rather than palliate his absence. The effect answered his expectation. Edmund's anxiety producing the most pressing request to be made acquainted with the real cause of his detention.—The *real* cause, however,
not

not being at present the proper object of communication, the Captain took the pen, and with a facility which a long practice in the art of fiction had rendered even habitual, composed the following epistle, which as it may serve as a specimen of *friendship*, in the modern acceptation of the word, we lay before the reader *verbatim*.

“ Doth then my dear Edmund imagine that my absence from him in these moments of tribulation, is the consequence of a falling off in that attachment so long subsisting between us,—or that my anxiety is not heightened by the cruel necessity that delays my journey to Wellford Lodge ?

“ Well acquainted with the warmth of that friendship manifested to me in so many
acts

acts of liberality, I forbore in my last to touch on the real cause of my being detained in this place, least the circumstance might occasion exertions on your part highly detrimental to your real interest, and equally well too with the fulness of your heart, resulting from the melancholy tendence of recent circumstances, I trembled, least a knowledge of your friend's embarrassment should add an acrimonious particle to the general mass of your sorrow. Now that your positive commands are laid on me, my anxiety gives way to a just sense of the gratitude I owe, and I, without farther preface, unbosom myself.

“ You recollect Jack Sandforth of our regiment, a young fellow of a tolerable head,

head, and a heart inferior to few, unluckily the income of Jack was not always equal to his expenditure, and to rescue him from a dilemma (the operation of which, his interest with a relation on whom he was much in dependance, would have suffered a material injury) I gave security to a considerable amount, and his death, which happened soon after, left me exposed to the fury of his creditor. On my part, I feel little repugnance for the commission of an act which my feelings sanctioned, tho' the consequence has involved me in all the gloomy horrors of imprisonment. I conjure you Edmund no farther to interest yourself in my unpropitious affairs, than may suit your perfect convenience—the certainty

certainly of my inability to extricate myself, without the actual sale of my commission, may soften the severity of my imprisonment, but if not, the disposal of this commission can at any rate procure my liberation.

“Midst my own unexpected misfortunes, believe me Edmund your unhappiness forms no inconsiderable portion of that acrimony that, at present poisons my thoughts, and renders me altogether unfit to give you the advice you solicit, but be assured, the moment I am at liberty will be devoted to your service, and will personally afford me the pleasure of testifying how much I am, &c. &c.”

A person,

A person, more given to suspicion than Edmund, might have been deceived by the plausibility of this fabrication, it is not to be wondered then, if it made all the impression wished for by the writer, or that the speediest means were employed to raise a sum adequate to the supposed urgency of the case, but the affairs of the youth being still in an unsettled state, more time was requisite for the fulfilment of the intention than he at first imagined, during which interval some occurrences took place not a little interesting to *himself*, perhaps not altogether unworthy the notice of the reader.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

In which two Strangers are introduced.

MUTUALLY as Edmund and his sister strove to avoid all familiar intercourse, their morning walks, tho' seldom commenced together, generally ended in the company of one another.—It was in one of these inconsiderate rambles, that they found themselves in the avenue that had been the favourite resort of Lady Wellford.—Nature and art combined to render it delightful and picturesque.—The dewy moisture

ture of night still tipt the tops of the fragrant verdure with pearly drops, and the feathered natives of the neighbouring groves, harmonized the bosom by their melody.—The contemplation of such objects led them to protract their walk, and they reached the gate that terminated the shrubbery, and opened into the adjoining lawn.

“ I have not a friend in the world,” exclaimed a voice in a pathos of extreme misery—they stopt, the gate only separated them from the speaker—a female, whose appearance concorded but too nearly with the sadness of her words. Her dress had once been genteel, but was now faded
and

and torn, a just emblem of her countenance, which tho' dimmed in lustre by adverse fortune, still proclaimed what it had once been, her person was turned in elegance; and, indeed, her whole figure gave force to the suggestion conveyed by her exclamation. "Poor creature!" said Charlotte, as she surveyed her through eyes dimmed with the moisture of sensibility.—

"Not one friend to bid her be at peace, when the accumulating weight of misfortune has thus reduced her to despondency, perhaps to want.—How happy am I in a comparative sense, and how unjustly do I complain, when I have the happiness of a brother to sooth my sorrow and direct my conduct."

"And

“ And does not this poor unfortunate,” cried Edmund, with a benevolent smile, “accuse the occurrences of life with a like injustice, when she pronounces her want of the sweets of friendship? You, indeed, Charlotte have a brother, but she will find the united protection of us both—Heaven, in this instance, is kind to us,—for you know I only borrow a sentiment of your own, when I say, that in the genuine exercise of a charitable act, the receiver is the least benefited.”

At the noise of opening the gate, the poor woman turned her eyes from the ruminating direction they had taken, and there was a soft expression of sorrow in her look that still farther impressed Edmund,

he invited her to come in, and pointing to the house, gently entreated her to walk to it, where she would at least find temporary refreshment and assistance.

“And prithee let me be included in the invitation?” suddenly, cried a gentleman, that on the instant appeared in the entrance.—There was a frankness in the manner of this address which overcame every idea of its abruptness, and there was also an expression of good humour depicted in the features of the speaker, which threw a veil over his familiarity.

“Every man has his hobby,” added this stranger as he entered and shut the gate behind him; “and the singularity of mine,

mine, has given it a cast of whimsicality. It is the study of occult perception.—Thank heaven, and the common chance of ancestors being born before me, my circumstances afford sufficient scope for the cultivation of a science so sublime, and I flatter myself my proficiency has, in some degree, kept pace with my attention.—Phisiognomy is the principal point to which I fix my assiduity, and, notwithstanding the lineaments of the face, and the inclinations of the heart are frequently at variance, I can easily connect the features of a countenance, and from such connection, pretty accurately define the leading principle.”

So saying, he glanced his eyes over the objects before him ; no glance was ever to

them less acceptable,—had Aristotle or even Lavater wrote volumes for sheets on the perceptible affinity between the mind and the countenance, and had our present party read such productions with the most marked attention, their belief would have been less than it proved, on the single unsubstantial assertion of this stranger.

Who is it ? it may be asked, whose actions have been so uniformly guided by propriety, that, on a similar scrutiny and declaration, would not have felt a flush of conviction open the very doors to that inward communication which the examiner wished for.—Charlotte, clothed as she was in the purity of innocence, felt her cheek burn with a deep crimson; the eye of her brother

brother saw her embarrassment, and he inwardly felt an undescribable anguish too strongly testify the cause, their guilt, if it might be so harshly denominated, was unintentional, and it appeared only criminal when the nice eye of propriety was applied to the investigation of their conduct, from the period when the certainty of their nearness of kindred rendered the accomplishment of their wishes impracticable.

The stranger was too much a connoisseur in the changes of the human aspect to impute their confusion to any thing like criminal frailty, on the contrary, he perceived so much sweetness shine through the temporary shade of abashment, that his heart smote him for using so abrupt a declaration.

“ When we are better acquainted,” cried he, with the same frankness and good humour,—“ you will readily pardon the liberty of my intrusion.—On my soul ! I wish no person ill—but all happy. Some melancholy occurrence, I perceive, hath recently happened in this place,—permit me the satisfaction of attempting to alleviate its severity. I will just step and order my companions round to the house, and do myself the honor of attending you thither.”

These *companions* had already reached the gate, and consisted of a groom, two beautiful horses, and a spaniel ; to every one of which, in turn, the gentleman said something kind and condescending.

“ You

" You see my associates," observed he, on his return, " they are not, I confess altogether calculated for *rational* conversation, but they are harmless, and so obedient, that I do not recollect an instance of their refusing a compliance with my commands, or of granting such compliance with reluctance. The reason, indeed, may be (for you must know, that I dash a little philosophy into the mass of my qualifications), that I never issue an order, that I would not with cheerfulness execute myself were I in their respective situations."

Edmund shook him by the hand,—so congenial to his way of reasoning was this last declaration, that he forgot their being

entire strangers to one another, and bade him kindly welcome. On their way to the Lodge, the stranger entertained them with many little pleasant anecdotes, which, in a great measure, furnished a true idea of his character, and so familiarized them in conversation, that the servants, on their arrival, supposed them acquaintances of a very long standing—nor was his reception less hospitable on account of his visit being unprelaced, nor did he feel himself one jot less at home, because his being there had not the formality of an invitation,—the truth was, he seldom was from *home*, there being an internal tranquillity belonging to him, which made him happy in all situations, and there was a something which gave an evenness to this tranquillity, namely, a conviction

a conviction that his manner and good humour gave a zest of satisfaction to all around him ; the reader will be pleased to take this last remark only in a general sense ; for, in particular instances, his peculiar mode of forming his opinion from appearances, gave too much umbrage to allow his supposing he gave satisfaction.

Whilst Edmund strove to make this gentleman sensible that the kindness of his welcome was sincere, Charlotte no less interested herself in the comfort of the female visitant, whose story, related with all the melancholy pathos which catches the attention, and creates correspondent sympathy, rendered her the object of pity and commiseration.

CHAP. II.

*Fiction sometimes equal to Truth in its
Effects.*

THE father of Clarissa Beaumont (for by this name the stranger introduced her story) by an early and parsimonious frugality, rose from the situation of a low mechanic to that of a country squire, but his manners or disposition maintaining no proportion with his rapid advance in pecuniary circumstances, he remained equally uncultivated and unfeeling.

SAID—

Clarissa

Clarissa was his only child, and the child too of his age, yet was his fondness for her destitute of that sentiment that gives to paternal love, the eager anxiety to benefit and make happy its object; on the contrary, a lurking partiality for that wealth, procured with so much pain and assiduity, absorbed the tender solicitude of a father, in consequence, the happiness of his daughter was consulted only as it tended to promote the preservation and accumulation of his fortune.

A match between Clarissa and the son of a rich city tradesman, had been proposed and concluded on, with that celerity with which the parents had been wont to strike other bargains, the affections of the parties

more immediately concerned never having been deemed of any kind of consequence; these affections, however, rose in opposition to this sordid agreement by Clarissa, for struck by the person and amiable disposition of a youthful neighbour, she had previously resigned her heart on a well grounded conviction of a mutual attachment.

The knowledge of this prepossession enraged the father, and the ruin of the youth who thus thwarted his intentions, became determined on. This harsh determination was easily effected; poverty can make but a feeble stand against riches and power, when supported only by purity and worth.—The youth had, unthinkingly,

ingly, transgressed the law, by shooting a partridge, and in defending himself from a personal attack made on him by Mr. Beaumont, on whose premises the trespass was committed, incurred the penalty of an assault also. In consequence of this double crime, he was convicted; and the only alternative of transportation, was the army.—No hesitation could take place in forming a determination, and he avoided the ignominy of the one, by immediately enlisting for a soldier, in a regiment then on the Irish establishment; and was even forced to join the corps, without even the consolation of bidding adieu to his Clarissa. By the assistance of a friend, however, a literary correspondence was kept up, which, in some degree,

degree, palliated absence, and preserved the fond hope of again meeting.—This was but transitory;—the correspondence stopt on his part without any reason being assigned.—Some months the unhappy Clarissa passed in almost intolerable suspense;—the commands of her father, for the fulfilment of his bargain became too cruel and inexorable;—the day of marriage was fixed; and to avoid its horrors she quitted her home, without money; or even a friend that could assist her necessity.—The idea of her Charles prevented her sinking under such an affliction.:—she wandered to the most contiguous sea-port, where, having disposed of the little clothes she could spare, she procured a passage to Dublin; but sad was her disappointment,

the

the regiment in which her Charles was, had some time previous marched to Cork.—On foot, tired, and reduced to extreme necessity, she reached that city.—The regiment was, on the moment of her arrival, drawn up on the parade; but in vain did her eyes examine the ranks in search of her Charles. The beloved object of her search and of her sufferings, no longer held his place in them;—many days before a fever had consigned him to an early grave.

The soldier who gave her this sad intelligence, had been the comrade of the unfortunate youth, he had often heard his story, and as he related the account of his fate, the tear ran down his cheek. “If you are Clarissa Beaumont,” said he, as
he

he gently seated her upon a bench: "I have a present for you;" he pulled out from his bosom a little pocket-book, tied with a green ribbon: which he kissed as he untied;—he himself had been, or rather was, still in love;—and this ribbon, the little book, and the greater part of the valuables it contained, were presents, which long absence had rendered sacred.—"It is your Charles's fleece buttons.—Small," added he with a sigh, "is the legacy, left by the poor soldier; but not less worthy for its want of intrinsic value.—In his last moments, I sat by Charles, and kept the rag that hung round his bed between us, that he might not see I wept."—He gave me these buttons,—"William," cried he, and he looked so piteous, "I shall never
more

more see my Clarissa, but you are my friend, and I know will contrive some means to convey to her these buttons,—and William," continued he, after a pause, "tie this ribbon still closer round my arm!—'tis a pledge of love, and I beg it may go to the grave with me."

"And did it go to the grave with my beloved?" exclaimed Clarissa, in a frantic tone. "It did," replied the soldier, firmly, "D—n me! if our Colonel, himself, durst have removed it." Her spirits which had bore her up through this sad recital, now failed, and she sunk senseless on the ground. William soon procured assistance, and as he repeated the story to his companions, drew from them a tribute of heartfelt

heartfealt sympathy. The officers too heard it not unmoved, and generously contributed to her relief, and by their assistance, she was enabled to return to England. A just and melancholy representation of her deplorable situation was not, however, sufficient to move the obduracy of her father; his doors were shut against her; and an apoplectic fit, which soon after cut him off, gave validity to a will he had made in favor of a distant relation. The tale of her having followed, and been among foldiers, had rendered her applications to her other relatives equally fruitless.—Shunned and reduced to absolute want; she had wandered without knowing, or caring where. And, in all human probability, would soon have

have dropped into that oblivion, which death ensures to the distressed, had not providence directed her steps to Wellford Lodge, where her misery felt an immediate mitigation.

The brother and sister, lent an unsuspecting attention to this humble, but affecting narrative, which strongly assimilated with the sadness of their present thoughts. But the stranger, (*i. e.* the gentleman just arrived) put on looks which appeared to denote a suspicion of the story's authenticity. The truth was, the ear was not the organ, by which he formed his opinion, in most cases, and in this, a train of circumstances seemed to oppose his credibility ; — whether
right

right or wrong, will appear in its proper place, meantime, a sketch of the character of a person so singular as himself, may be thought, by some of our readers, not altogether unacceptable.

Possessing, at a very early period, an income that far exceeded the limits of common expenditure; and being without any particular tie to render his family seat sufficiently attractive to domesticate the natural levity of thought: Sir Samuel Belford gave fancy the rein and without forming any regular system for the government of his conduct, sat off, in the Quixote phrase, "*in quest of adventures.*"—Nature had bestowed on him a vigorous constitution, which had neither
been,

been impaired by excess, nor rendered lax by inactivity; his understanding had been cultivated by education, and his manners polished by an early familiarity with the world of fashion; his imagination was lively, which would have led his pursuits after objects of mirth and ridicule, had it not been tempered by the impulse of a heart, warmly inclined to benevolence, and turned to sympathy by the gentlest touch. In short, he was a mixture of levity and sentiment, not easily reconciled by common rules of observation; and a medley of extravagance and circumspection, to which no rule of propriety could apply.

His

His favorite hypothesis of physiognomy, was not founded on suppositions, gathered from the abstruse definitions of antient philosophers, but formed entirely from his own singular calculation, of the visible operation of effects on the human passions; and though this method of determination often led him into error and difficulty, yet so obstinate was he in the notion of his being generally right, that particular objections made but little impression; by this occult criterion, therefore, he bestowed his friendship, and conceived his antipathies; and during the tour, which he made on the continent, this humour subjected him to innumerable inconveniences.—In Paris, he had been run through the body by a marquis, for

for presuming to make love to a *fille de chambre*, in preference to a lady of quality, who at that time the nobleman idolized: and at Turin, he had been called on to a similar decision, on a business the very reverse of that at Paris, namely, his professing an admiration for the wife of a Neapolitan, and throwing out some flitting expressions against the looks of her attendant, on whom the husband at that time doated.—He had been cast into prison at Rome, for taking part with a plebian against an ecclesiastic, neither of whom he had ever seen before, and refused the mediation of the British ambassador, because he thought he perceived some ungainly traces in his countenance. Nay! in crossing the Alps, he had carried
his

his notions, in this respect, so far, as to renounce the friendly society of some of his own countrymen, who were travelling in the same direction, and chose for his companions two gentlemen, whose aspects he liked, but who differed so essentially in their dispositions from this outward testimonial of rectitude, that by them he was robbed and left for dead, together with his servant, and would inevitably have finished his studies in this sublime science, on the occasion, but for the providential arrival of these very men, whose company he had previously fled from with precipitation and disgust.

These traits, however disagreeable and dangerous, were overbalanced by those of
a different

a different complexion, which oft led him to participate in scenes of gaiety, and the enjoyment of internal satisfaction, and procured him the friendship of persons of real worth and integrity, with whom the little foibles which threw a dark shade over one corner of his portrait, were lost amidst the general excellence of the whole.

It was during one of his sentimental excursions, attended in the usual way, that he arrived at Wellford Lodge. He had left his family residence without any fixed determination; chance directed his course towards London, and on this rout he had proceeded a considerable way, when the same chance, furnished something like a cogent reason, for altering his line of travelling.

A mischievous boy, not indeed induced by *malice propense*, but, by that kind of inclination which did the business as effectually—rolled a hoop directly in opposition to the legs of the quadruped, on the back of which sat the groom of the baronet, and neither of the two having received any previous warning against the effects of this circular impediment, were in an instant forced from their postures, with a shock that furnished much less gratification to themselves, than mirth to the spectators; the horse soon recovered his natural position, but poor George, in his rapid descent towards his parent earth, passed so close in the neighbourhood of a post, that had his skull been made of a less impenetrable texture than its wooden opponent, it would have

have been most certainly fractured in the contact,—as it was, the blow stunned him, he was carried insensible to the next inn, and in spite of the exertions of a very able surgeon, he continued for some days in a dangerous situation.—It was during this illness, that the groom had often expressed an anxious wish to see the place of his nativity, and his master had as often determined within himself, to gratify this wish on his recovery.

They had now again mounted their horses.—“How little will the gratification of this wish detract from my own happiness,” said Sir Samuel, “yet I would not willingly limit his happiness, by laying the poor fellow under the sense of an obligation,”

tion,"—this was said to himself, and as he concluded, he beckoned George toward him.

"In Paris, George," said he, "I contracted an acquaintance with Sir Philip Ashmore, of Lincolnshire, and still lie under the promise of visiting him, but being a stranger to the roads"—the groom's eyes sparkled, "please your honor," cried he, interrupting his master, in a kind of natural extacy—"I know every road within twenty miles of his residence, I was born on his honor's estate."—The good humoured baronet knew this, but effected surprise—George instinctively pointed with his finger toward the spot of his nativity, and

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and a cross road at this moment presenting itself, they turned into it.

Sir Samuel Belford was just as well pleased on one road as on another, and they proceeded in the usual way, till approaching the summit of a little eminence, his eyes were gratified with the prospect of one of the most rural and romantic seats he had ever beheld. The groom was well acquainted in this part of the country. The house he said belonged to the Earl of Wellford, who had, however, never been in the country; "but it serves," added he, with a look of much significance, "as a place of retirement for his lady."

The baronet quitted his saddle—a nearer inspection only raised his curiosity, and

determined him to pay the occupier a visit; as he advanced to the gate, the appearance of Edmund and his sister made him hesitate, he surveyed them in astonishment and admiration.—“Such! exclaimed he, “were the happy pair, that in *primeval* days gladdened by their presence the blissful walks of paradise.”

No pair, indeed, to an admirer of symmetrical elegance, could have been formed more complete, in them both, native proportion was so accompanied by acquired ease and elegance, that had an artist intended to have furnished a just representation of the goddess of beauty and her favourite Adonis, here he would have found reality far outstrip the most refined models of

of the imagination. In the countenance of Edmund, tho' soft, open, and delicate, the baronet could perceive no signs of effeminacy; but, on the contrary, through the air of melancholy and dejection that enveloped it, there was to him visible the ripened nobleness of manly vigour and intrepidity. The aspect of his sister contained every thing that is termed by connoisseurs beautiful, without the assistance of that art which fashion sanctions, or being destitute of that lovely simplicity which the reigning rage of the day has banished from the features. The sable dress they wore, whilst it denoted the recent visitation of death, set off to infinite advantage persons in themselves so attractive, and secured at once the esteem and commiseration of their beholder.

CHAP. VIII.

*A familiar mode of making Love, occasions
a Battle in a stile truly Modern.*

THE kind and undisssembled reception the baronet met with at Wellford Lodge, did not lessen the notions of his boasted occult penetration :—the more he exercised this talent, the more was he convinced that the face was the best index to the real disposition, and that it was owing only to a superficial inspection, that this sense could be deceived, the inward inclination, he concluded, would, in despite of art, give a
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cast of similitude to the outward aspect, and whether this inclination was turned to virtue or to vice, tempered by the soft insinuations of sorrow, or warmed by the joyous exhilarations of mirth, still the prominent principle must strike the eye of the curious and attentive observer, and form the basis of a positive elucidation. To a person, therefore, of his sagacity and penetration, the task of tracing the gloom that darkened the atmosphere of Wellford Lodge, to its real source, was easy; the air of sadness and dejection that overclouded the lineaments of Edmund, and dimmed the native lustre of his eye, with a cast of piteous eccentricity, he saw was not alone the consequence of filial grief, and the drop that would unperceived en-

deavour to steal down the cheek of Charlotte, guided him to the true knowledge of that uneasiness, that drew forth all his pity and sympathy. He had, it was true, no necessity for remaining in these haunts of melancholy and dejection, but the ideas of the baronet, as has been said, were singular, and often led him to form conclusions dimetrically opposed to his tranquillity—he saw the cause of his entertainer's grief required the aid of cheerful society to assuage its severity, and to use his best endeavour for this purpose was to him a pleasure, which he would not have foregone for the voluptuous satisfaction of being o'erwhelmed in the giddy vortex of a fashionable town life.

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“I may be wrong,” would he say to himself, “yet positively I think, there is no *pleasure* equal to that derived from a sympathetic participation in the *sorrow* of others; let those who never have dried the moisture of grief from the cheek of the wretched, call this a paradox, let them ridicule the notion of drawing satisfaction from so gloomy a source, and welcome. I do not envy the levity of their disposition, nor will I turn aside from every species of amusement that is not derived from mirth, or exists in that trivial gaiety that will not bear inspection.”

Than Sir Samuel, none was better qualified to render this self-imposed task serviceable; for tho' he could weep with the

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afflicted,

afflicted, he had a fund of risibility in his temperament that could in the end give a cast of pleasantry to the aspect, and he had a peculiar method of leading the thoughts from their primitive object, by gradually turning the conversation to subjects of a different tendency. By his assiduity in these respects, the clouded atmosphere of Wellford Lodge began once more to brighten, and had it been permitted to continue, might, in the end, have become permanently serene.

Edmund had now raised the sum which the supposed necessity of his friend Fairfax required, and with all that inward gratification which results from the exercise of a generous action, he had sat down to
write

write rather an apology for this friendly interference, than a recital of the difficulties that had retarded his interposition—when the door of his chamber suddenly opened, and Charlotte, in wild disorder, threw herself into his arms; it seemed the last exertion of departing strength, and he saw her on the moment apparently deprived of life.

A footman followed her into the apartment—"Miss Charlotte has been sadly frightened," cried he, "and I am afraid the two gentlemen will kill one another." The latter part of the servant's information was lost on the alarmed Edmund, his quick transition from the langour of contemplative composition, to the extreme of surprise and

and terror, had left no room for additional apprehension. The whole universe seemed contracted within the circle of his arms—and even this invaluable particle stamped with all the misery of departed animation. 'Tis the certainty of being for ever separated from the object of our affections, that points out the sincerity of them, and it is from such unexpected proofs, that a real knowledge of the heart, and what it can sustain, is acquired,—all the prudential suggestions of the baronet, and all the previous determinations of Edmund to put a negative on the workings of his misconceived love, vanished;—dearer to him than a thousand sisters she appeared, and as he held her in his grasp, his fortitude, and even his reason, forsook him.

Charlotte

Charlotte soon again, however, revived, the lips of her brother were, as it were, riveted to her cheek, and the impropriety of their situation rushed on her recollection, she started from his embrace—unintentional had been her error, but her fright had betrayed her into a disclosure of her real sentiments more intelligible than a thousand oral declarations. Edmund too, wanted but a hint to recal his reason, the significant and penetrating look of his sister filled him with confusion, and his eagerness to be made acquainted with the nature of her alarm tho' nothing lessened, was yet checked by a conscious circumspection.

Charlotte, as was often her custom, had stole out to enjoy an hour of undisturbed meditation

meditation amidst the silence of walks long rendered familiar and dear to her, when the very unexpected appearance of a stranger surprised her, he advanced with an unceremonious freedom, and stood disclosed—her now elder brother, Lord Southby. The little intercourse that had subsisted between the divisions of the family, had neither precluded a knowledge of his person, nor a just opinion of his Lordship's profligacy, and in consequence she endeavoured to return home immediately, but without being guilty of absolute rudeness, found it, in the first instance, impossible. The range of Southby's intrigues, had principally been confined to a circle where his title and money had always insured success—He was charmed with

with the beauty of Charlotte, and viewing her still in the light of an humble dependant, gave a scope to his conversation, and induced him even to take liberties with her person, which her pride and strict sense of honor, rendered totally repugnant to her ideas; his Lordship was, however, too sensible of his own importance, and too conceited of his own personal qualifications, to construe her opposition to any thing else than the common affectation of modesty, he had heard, it is true, by the letters of his brother, the disclosed affinity between Charlotte and himself, an affinity which his father had not in anywise contradicted, but to have admitted this an obstacle to the accomplishment of his momentary passion, would have been acting so like other people,

people, that he despised it. The determined resistance he met with, but increased his desire, and led him to use a force unworthy the dignity of a man. Overpowered by his brutal strength, she sunk on the ground,—but that guardian angel who protects real innocence interposed, and directed the steps of Sir Samuel Belford towards the spot, in one of his solitary rambles, and the shrieks of Charlotte conducted him timeously to save her.

The baronet had a peculiar method of expressing himself on occasions like the present, when his humanity kicked consideration from the seat of the understanding, he had oft admired the adage which says “a man should know a little of every thing,”

thing," and tho' some sober mortals will insist that pugilism ought to form no part of genteel education, yet he had frequently experienced its usefulness, particularly on events where the impetuosity of his temper would otherwise have subjected him to corporeal discomfiture.—Indeed, none in the county, where his home was, doubted his prowess as a boxer, and tho' neither a prize fighter, nor a deliberate disturber of society, so well established was his reputation, that few would have carried a dispute with him to this kind of issue. He had beat the famous Tom Jenkins, of the west riding, not from any ambitious incitement, but merely because the said Thomas had, in a most wanton and unprovoked manner, laid hold on the nose of him, the said Sir Samuel's groom,

groom, and had, to the extreme pain and no less mortification of the said groom, violently pinched and shaken this delicate and very conspicuous feature, without the consent or approbation of its proprietor. He had also chastised the insolence of the Lincolnshire carpenter who had, in utter defiance of decorum, laid out a sum of money gained in a well-fought match, in the purchase of a flag, which decorated with emblematical trophies of his ambidexterity, he had displayed in the public road, immediately opposite his shop window, in a kind of *terrorum* to all passengers. The baronet accidentally passing that way, and learning the cause of this ridiculous mummery, not only demolished the ensign of defiance, but bestowed on the

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the wooden minded braggart, one of those lessons which, however painful in the initiation, are generally impregnated with a kind of force, which gives to the memory a very beneficial impression.

Never, perhaps, was the baronet's adroitness in this science, more useful than on the present occasion, for Lord Southby was a youth who considered a scar left by manual application, a mark of distinction; he had long been even an encourager of this noble art, and had practised it himself with no small degree of success. Every art or science hath their degrees of perfection. Lord Southby had on his first commencing a pupil of Mendoza, been content with the simple honor
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of bottle holder to battles of inferior celebrity, but ambition keeping pace with his progress, he at last was constituted by general acclamation, umpire to that never to be equalled, and perhaps, but this is a query, never to be forgotten, contest, between the celebrated Johnson and the equally admired Benjamin the Great: finding, however, his advancement was rivalled by too many to support his mode of singularity, he quitted this direct line of honor, and adopted one more of his own, and in many particulars of which, namely, the knocking down an inoffensive watchman, or the overturning a barrow woman, and afterwards giving the most impressive satisfaction to her champion, he stood single and celebrated,

From

From such mutual skill and courage, the reader may conclude, that no combat ever commenced with more probability of being warmly contested, and, we had almost said, that no battle ever since the period that these direful kind of decisions of the human passion became fashionable, had for their ground-work, an object more worthy of contention ; let the historian vilify this observation only, who hath well considered the minute frivolity of those causes, that ever since the creation, have regulated the senates of the earth, wrought on the passions of mankind, and scattered around havock and-desolation at once to convince mortals of their errors, and to punish that very folly from which such error originated.

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The baronet, warmed by a sense of Charlotte's danger, struck the first blow with a fury, that sent his Lordship to a respectful distance from the timid object of his lust, and might likewise have discomposed the economy of the brain, on whose case this forcible application was made, had that case been composed of penetrable materials, but the density of the skull bade defiance to outward assault, and, in consequence, the seat of this courtesy peer remained in a state of perfect security. The blow, however, was attended with all the good consequence which such a seasonable interruption prognosticated ; as it gave to the terrified Charlotte an opportunity of escaping the threatened danger, and of throwing herself into the arms of him who

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engrossed her dearest attention. The mortification of the disappointment added force to the erasible particles, which the salutation of the Baronet had collected in the brain of Lord Southby—a mixture of rage and contempt shone forth in his countenance, he advanced with a scientific flourish, and in his own phrase, would have “tipt the aggressor a plumper” not of the pleasantest complexion, had not the other warded it off with an unexpected adroitness, and taking advantage of his Lordship’s failure, in a true military style, “turned him in flank,” and darting the *retort courtois* immediately under his left ear, stretched him on the earth.

A hero of antiquity would have used this advantage to effect; *Æneas*, lost not the opportunity when the gallant *Turnus* fell; and the royal youth of Judea, leaped on the neck of the fallen Phillistine, and smote off his head,—yet was the conduct of Sir Samuel regulated by no such precedents,—he good-naturedly helped his antagonist to his legs, but finding, from some very feeling evidence, that his intentions by no means inclined to the pacific,—he did that, which every wise man would have done, if in his power: namely —knocked his adversary down again.

A footman, who had observed the commencement of this action, without conceiving the slightest inclination to hazard

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an interference, had, however, followed his Lady home, and communicated such information to the other branches of the family, that a *posse* soon arrived on the spot, and put an end to the combat.

CHAP. IX.

The advantages of Birth, not always necessary to procure Consequence.

IT has already been stated in one of these preceding Chapters, that the love of singularity was the sole reason that deterred Lord Southby from paying immediate attention to the solicitation of his brother on the decease of their mother. Any son would have attended the funeral of so deserving a parent, and at least have conformed to the common usage of the times on such an occasion.—This was the
very

very reason, that drove him to an opposite line of conduct, and it was not till some weeks afterwards, that his Lordship on his return home, from a masquerade, ordered a post-chaise, and having, in his way, forced from his bed a gentleman who had long been his associate and confidant, and whom he honoured with the preference on this expedition drove off, without the smallest preparation on his visit to Wellford Lodge. They had past Highgate, and were got on Finchley Common, before his Lordship condescended to gratify his companion with a disclosure of his intention.

“ I think, Jennings,” said he, yawning, “ *papa* will be highly gratified with this proof of my filial obedience ;—as you

well know, how much he has teized me to comply with my brother's request—he would as soon be *d—n'd* as *budge* himself on so dismal an errand ;—and to tell you a truth, I would as soon have suffered the same punishment myself, as complied with his wish, had it not been for the whim of the thing : I trust in G—d that the old lady has been decently laid under ground, else, what a confounded figure I am destined to cut.—A funeral is such a *bore*, particularly, when one is obliged to perform a part in it.—

“ When lo ! the death bell smites the ear,

“ Sad founding in the gale !”

quoted he, with an accent of melancholy ;
for be it once for all known, that his

Lordship

Lordship was mightily fond of quotations, and as far as a line, or even a line and a half went—could give the meaning of the author its appropriate energy and force, and sometimes would throw in this borrowed aid, with well timed application and effect, but as to a complete verse or couplet—they required a degree of study and attention, beneath the dignity of a man of consequence. It only, in the notions of this youth, was pardonable in the mechanic to study, of course, he would have none on't—but to proceed.—

The gentleman to whom this was addressed, was too well acquainted with his Lordship, to be anywise surpris'd at the

want of feeling so *elegantly* expressed :—
at a very early period he had been appointed tutor to the youth, and had found out, at almost as early a period, that a cheerful compliance with the will of his pupil was the readiest way to his own ease and advantage. This mode soon procured him the confidence of his Lordship, and though the whimsicallity of the youth's temper, often subjected him to disagreeable alternatives, they were washed away by the frequent participation in his pupil's pleasures and extravagance, or at least rendered easy by the prospect of a good *living*, which was in the gift of Lord Wellford, and to the enjoyment of which he actually attained, as the reward for his assiduity.

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We may very safely, therefore, say that this reverend gentleman was nowise surprised at what fell from his Lordship, nor did he give himself any kind of trouble respecting the place of their destination ; to have reasoned on the precipitance of the movement would have been to little purpose—reason being a theme which Southby seldom studied himself, or loved to hear discussed by others,—Jennings, therefore, sat silent.

“ We must be in town again by Saturday,” observed Lord Southby, “ or my bet with Dick Sanford goes to the D—l. My Gipsy and new Curricie against Bell of Berner’s-street, in his Phaeton, four in hand, for a cool hundred,—besides I am

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matched against Lord Heavyside, for a thousand guineas to run one hundred yards, play or pay, his Lordship encumbered with no other impediment than his own corpulence, whilst your humble servant must sweat under the burthen of the fat widow of King's Place!" He was proceeding to the disclosure of some equally valuable and important engagements, when a voiceferous cry of Stop! gave the signal of alarm, and the carriage halting on the instant, his Lordship pulled out a pistol, and without the smallest consideration, discharged its contents on a random expedition through the window through which the demand had assailed them.—The report was echoed by the explosion of a similar instrument, and a
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bullet penetrating the chaise, grazed the breast of the divine, and lodged with a crash in one of the pockets.—We say with a *crash*, because contained within this very pocket was a bottle previously full of a liquid which its proprietor had termed *aqua vitæ*, in mere opposition to the vulgar name of *brandy*, bestowed on such a composition by such as used it for less *spiritual* purposes than did the Doctor, who, as he afterwards declared, had placed it there, for the sole purpose of bathing his eyes — To whatsoever cause it derived its etymology, or was honoured with its then situation, the unhallowed lead made no scruple to dislodge the thing itself with a rapidity that scattered it in form of a crimson shower, over the knees

and legs of its owner. The thoughts of the doctor were now in a state of agitation as totally to exclude the power of investigation ; and the colour of the streaming fluid conveyed a sensation of danger too acute to be sustained by the remnant of courage he possessed. His pupil, by having altered his position, now occupied the intermediate space between him and the avenue of escape least subject to danger—but, what was the impediment of a pupil to one who imagined dissolution as near, as though a field-piece loaded with grape shot was already pointed at his rear, one exertion forced open the door and tumbled both into the middle of the road, not, its true, in that kind of posture which nature points out as the most eligible either

ther for attack or defence, but a kind of position, in which every rule of nature as well as art was strangely perverted; conceiving no kind of attachment for the maintainance of ground every way untenable, his Lordship started to his feet, when lo! to his surprise, as well as mortification, the occasion of this fracas appeared neither in the shape of knight-errant or highwayman,—but in what, to him, was equally terrible,—namely, a beautiful woman, elegantly mounted on a foaming courser, holding a pistol steadily aimed at the head of her observer. It was, in truth, no less a personage than Lady Southby, the wife of his bosom, well known to the world, and indeed generally denominated by the husband himself, by the appellation

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of *Gipsey Nan* :—how her Ladyship became distinguished by such a title, or rather how she came to be known by any other—the reader may if he or she pleases, find as follows :

Situate in the Parish of St. Giles's in the fields, is a spot emphatically termed the "*Island*," because the manners and dispositions of its inhabitants, exhibit a striking contrast to the leading features of those of almost every other quarter of the metropolis. — No pleasurable object or odoriferous gale strikes on the sense of the delicate passenger, as he crosses the avenues leading to this celebrated nursery of vice and immorality. On the contrary, the eye recoils from the view of beings
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in which the combination of poverty and disease stands visible. The ear is stunned with sounds of the lowest human depravity, and even the health is endangered by the exhalation of vapours arising from contaminated filth and nastiness.—Here, industry seldom finds a home, and in consequence, nature and idleness are supported by acts which disunite the ties of friendship, and leads the wretch to trample on the laws of that society, in which he ought to form a useful part; here the hoary head drops into the grave unknown and unlamented, and the infantile mind, destitute of every example of propriety, imbibes only those notions that end in infamy and ruin. It was during a nocturnal excursion, that Lord Southby elevated with wine—
fauntered

sauntred into the centre of this unpropitious receptacle—some *gem'en* of the neighbourhood, attracted by his appearance, in attempting to secure part of his property by their own peculiar mode of private conveyance were detected, and a scuffle ensuing, his Lordship, as may be supposed, from his temerity in attacking a banditti in their own territory, after having sustained a very complete *drubbing*, was fain to take shelter in the first house he found open, leaving some valuable spoils in the hands of the conquerors, in testimony of their victory.

Seated, by the only fire of which this mansion could boast, sat one of those female mendicants, ycleped a *Gipsey*; and
by

by her a girl, whose tattered attire, though it certainly gave a full scope to the operation of nature, seemed to set common modesty at defiance. Southby, who seldom deliberated even on things of importance, allowed his passions to be deeply engaged by the external appearance of this nymph, which was exactly qualified to his taste, in point of symmetry and elegance, and suiting his addresses, to the time, and to the circumstances of the object, a bargain was with very little ceremony concluded, by which the venerable Egyptian, in consideration of a trifling equivalent, consigned over to his Lordship, all right, title, or claim, she, as a mother, previously possessed in the said young lady. Highly pleased with the purchase, the young nobleman

bleman carried her off in triumph, and put her under the immediate direction of a matron, well qualified for the task of the transformation necessary. If he was captivated with her at first sight, the metamorphoses that took place in cleanliness and dress, rendered her an object still more desirable,—she was, in fact, every thing that could be wished by a man of his disposition, who considered the cultivation of the mind, totally unconnected with his idea of gratification.—Nature, or rather her habits of life, had blest her with a ready volubility of utterance, which chance, sometimes, qualified with points of wit, and turns of well placed humour, that well suited the shallowness of his Lordship's understanding; and there was

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in her air and manner, a forward ease and assurance, which even long habitude with the gay world sometimes fails to establish, but which failed not to operate where it was most essential.—“ Wonder not, therefore, reader, that honorable proposals succeeded; or that Nan, in consequence, became elevated to the rank of nobility,—not, but that his Lordship might have settled matters on easier terms, but there would have been nothing *novel* in that—every youth of his acquaintance enjoyed the society of their own *chere amie* in private, and his settling matters in a similar way would have been but adding a pair to the general flock. A marriage so sudden—so unequal—and so diametrically opposite to every wish and hope of his family,

family, was *new* and highly gratifying.—The world, and its censure, he cared little about, and even the anger of his father was amongst the last of his considerations. Highly mortified and incensed as the Earl was, at a step so unpropitious, there was so strong a partiality inherent in his nature, towards his heir-apparent, that it was forgiven, and Lady Southby was received, if not with all the cordiality generally bestowed on so near a relation, yet with a decent civility, which at least gave a sanction to the match. Indeed, Nan scarcely stood in need of such a sanction to establish a reputation in high life.—She was blest with a portion of assurance, suitable to her rank, and she had a turn for gaiety and extravagance which the most

genteel

genteel bred lady in the upper circles might have envied,—with such superficial advantages, Lady Southby *dashed* into the gay world, merely, as she said, to do credit to the choice of her Lord,—none could dress more expensively, or *keep it up* in a better style. She rode on horseback with spirit and elegance.—And in driving a curricie, she stood unrivalled; there was a majesty in her person that set off to infinite advantage, a fashionable and manly step and swagger, in which, though imitated by all, she was excelled by none, and there was in all her actions, an attending confidence, which, however untoward, gave them a cast of propriety.

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Such conduct, and the unlimited approbation that followed it, highly pleased the husband in the first instance,—but somehow or other, with the general approbation, there was mixt some particular instances of marked good will, which did not, in the smallest degree, add to his Lordship's satisfaction. With her other qualifications, her Ladyship had a *spirit* superior to contradiction, and an ambition, (more laudable perhaps than pleasant) which soon held her from being the humble pupil of her husband, to assume the absolute reins of family government; not that his Lordship sat tamely down under this usurpation, but like most other husbands, in like situations, his efforts to curb his wife's career of extravagance

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was ever ill timed, and consequently non-effective. Home, by these means, became not one of the most comfortable situations, but as his Lordship considered the connubial chain not of that strength or importance which the more humble situated husbands generally do, his intrigues were carried on with little restraint, and the bondage rendered as light as possible. In this disposition he was aptly imitated by her Ladyship, who intruded on his moments of solitude, only when the imperious calls of an empty purse rendered such intrusion more necessary than pleasant. It was in the midst of one of these agreeable *tête-à-têtes*, that his Lordship, without giving way to the urgent demands of a help-mate, took what is generally

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rally termed *French leave*, and set out on the very journey, in which we find him so unexpectedly impeded. Her Ladyship highly disappointed and incensed, swore, by the father who begat her, (in which by the bye, she alluded to no known earthly creature, for though, no-doubt, Nan, in common with others, had the honour of such a parent, and though several very distinguished gentlemen, in the level in which she originated, had laid claim to that distinction, yet so scrupulous in point of conscience was her mother, that she never could be brought to declare a preference,) that she would have ample satisfaction, to effect which, nothing was so probable, as either interrupting his present journey or forcibly accompanying him in it.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

A positive way to solicit a compliance, together with a letter explanatory of its Author's character.

LADY SOUTHBY, in consequence of this determination, procured information of her Lord's rout, mounted her fleetest horse, with a brace of loaded pistols in her girdle, and, followed by a couple of favorite grooms, armed equally formidable, pursued after him. The first part of the encounter hath already appeared.

“What Nan,” cried his Lordship, “my dear girl, to what!”—“No wheedling,” exclaimed the lady, interrupting him, and taking a still more certain aim at that part where brains are in general deposited—“Either accompany me back to town, or I accompany you into the country.” “And what may be the alternative to these very condescending proposals my dear?” demanded he. “Instant death; or what, to a man of honor, is still worse, deliberate c—dome!” His Lordship scratched his forehead; he well knew the high temper and determination of his Lady was equal to a strict fulfilment of either threat; and not being anywise disposed to incur the penalty of the first, or wait the consequence of the other, he quietly consented, or rather

ther submitted to the second proposal, and with a heart very much at *ease*, handed her Ladyship into the chaise, not without some secret wishes that her neck might be broke before their arrival at the place of destination,—for this very submissive conduct, he received a kiss of reconciliation, and her Ladyship declaring all differences were at an end, they drove on, never once recollecting the situation of the Parson, who, thus left to himself, was fain to trudge back to the metropolis, not one jot fuller of that good-will he entertained for this *happy* couple, than he had been previous to his leaving it.

The noble pair prosecuted their journey in tolerable good humour. Nan, who in

her earlier days, had tasted the sweets of a country life, during her frequent pilgrimages to and from Norwood, now expatiated on the beauties around them with that facility, with which a city miss, after a twelve months residence at a Kentish-town boarding school, entertains a Pudding-lane circle with a history of rural simplicity, and the advantages of a country life. Lord Southby, who viewed the objects thus described, not altogether with an eye so scientific, entered but faintly into the spirit of this elucidation; his principal anxiety being how to extricate himself from a restraint which so close an association with a wife conferred. In consequence of this, they had no sooner reached the near vicinity of Wellford Lodge, than, quitting the carriage,

carriage, his Lordship vaulted nimbly over the park wall, and disappeared, leaving his rib to go round to the gate in whatsoever humour she pleased.

Thus, then, is the unexpected appearance of Lord Southby in the peaceable domains of his brother accounted for, and the following letter, which is copied *verbatim*, from the original manuscript, sent to Mr. Jennings, the reverend gentleman so lately mentioned, will, in some measure, explain the subsequent conduct of his Lordship; it was written on the morning after his arrival, and displays a pretty plain specimen of his Lordship's contrition for a conduct at once so wicked and so absurd.

“On my soul! my dear Jennings, of all earthly situations, this same Wellford Lodge is the most preposterous to a fellow of my way of thinking. The gay, the enlivening scenes of the metropolis are here so dismally contrasted, that even as I approached it I was involuntarily seized with sensations of antipathy and horror, it seemed *sweet* solitude with a vengeance! the dreary whistling of the winds through the trees that overhung the road; the gloomy croaking of the rooks, and other birds of equal cheerfulness, joined in symphony, with the musical brayings of some *reverend* quadrupeds pent up in a neighbouring inclosure, formed altogether a concert not quite suited to my taste.—It happened too, however surprising it may seem, that the conversation

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versation between my fellow traveller and myself, had taken a languid turn, not to say worse of it,—on the whole, never was a countenance more exquisitely drest up to suit the journey of mourning I was engaged in, than was mine,—least, however, it should take an unfavorable turn, I left her Ladyship at the extremity of the park, and getting over the wall, took to a foot-path that leads to his worthy mansion of our forefathers.

“Far I had not proceeded, when sounds, different indeed from those I have just enumerated, saluted mine ear; attracted by their softness I quitted the path, and soon distinguished the object in which they originated.—A young girl, with a book in her

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hand,

hand, and with eyes turned upward, in a kind of enthusiastic attitude, sat under the shade of a spreading tree. 'Beauteous genius of these solitary groves!' exclaimed I, as I approached, 'permit a poor bewildered traveller thus to throw himself at your feet, and supplicate your protection and guidance.'

"She started from her devote posture, and looked on me with a fearful surprise; the look awakened our recollection, and whilst she uttered, good heaven! my Lord, is it you? I discovered her to be Charlotte, that charming little girl so much in the good graces of my mother, and whom I was wont to consider my play-fellow,—now ripened into woman, and finished

nished in elegance,—on my honor! Jennings, I never was more suddenly, or more forcibly struck, but why do I say *struck*; the instantaneous sensations I felt were enchanting, never till this moment had I seen any thing half so lovely, nor never felt a stronger inclination to profit by the opportunity, an over dose of Champaign swallowed at dinner, just to put my elocution on a footing with my *rib's*, now served as a stimulative to my native impudence,—Gipsy Nan, and all the combined beauty of London, might have gone to the d—l. Charlotte, all modesty and diffidence, was irresistible, consideration fled, and blinded by desire, I was about to obtain forcibly so delicious a prize, when lo, her cries brought

to her aid, a fellow, whose spirited interference brought back my scattered particles of thought with a celerity not inferior to that with which they had escaped,—in short, my reverend friend, with shame be it spoken, the dear faucy girl escaped my clutches, and in lieu of that bliss my heated imagination had depicted, I had the honor to receive a *drubbing*, which carried with it the complete rudiment of the exercise, and the lecture was delivered in a way so keenly expressive of the teacher's sincerity that I believe I shall never forget one jot of its import, and in consequence, like other just men, must return the obligation when I am able, at present my bones being rather out of tune for the purpose.

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“ Judge from this that my reception at the Lodge was by no means heightened by this transaction,—Charlotte views me with a scornful contempt; and Edmund, albeit moulded in tenderness and charity, can scarcely conceal his indignation at my conduct. I am very much mistaken in my opinion, if something interested is not at the bottom of this, and if eyes can express any kind of meaning, such an attempt on his part would have been attended with less violent opposition, and that bar of affinity in blood, which they wish to place between me and any further hopes I may entertain, I imagine will never be a drawback on their happiness.

“ To this last superstitious mummerly, from *family*, as well as other, motives, I am

for the present forced to subscribe, and have with no small degree of adroitness put on the semblance of contrition, and devoutly joined in the melancholy solemnities of the place,—this curb to my native bent, will only, however, ripen my more volatile thoughts to quicker maturity, and lay a train to that mine whose explosion will open a certain road to the full completion of my wishes.

“ By the bye, my worthy tutor, in your next letter, pray inform me, if during your long intimacy with the *old lad*, my papa, any circumstance occurs to your memory, that may throw some light on the real birth-right of Charlotte? I am in no other way curious on this point, than merely the satisfaction of going on a certainty.

“ We

“ We expect Captain Fairfax here in a few days; his very friendly advice and assistance, will be of much use to me in the present situation of things, you know the influence he has over Lady Southby, and at no time can it be exercised to better purpose, he is also in the bosom secrets of Edmund, and his superior knowledge of the ways of mankind, will assist me in counteracting the schemes of my athletic antagonist Sir Samuel Belford, whose present footing in the family is by far too high to be pleasant or safe.

“ Fairfax, before I left town, advised me he had drawn a bill on my agent for a sum highly necessary for his safety. I believe I have no money in the agent's hands;
do

do then beg my father to take the said bill up,—as to my debts to my tradesmen, I do not wish my right honorable *sire* to meddle—they must wait—and be d—n'd —I was going to say.

your's, always,

SOUTHEY."

CHAP.

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THE MISTAKE.

CHAP. XI.

*The origin of a very Fashionable
Ornament.*

WE left Edmund and his sister in a situation of thought in which love, fear, and shame, seemed to strive for a preponderance, from this state of agitation, they were soon, however, in some measure diverted, by the very unexpected entrance of Lady Southby, who *sans ceremonie*, burst into the apartment with her usual manly swagger, humming an Italian air with that confidential assurance, which
ever

ever distinguishes the *highly well bred* from the vulgar. As neither had ever been honored by a previous acquaintance with the person of this new relation, nor had ever been initiated in the mystery of fashionable life, they were equally surprised and awed by her Ladyship's presence, who having first paid a warm compliment to her own figure in the glass, turned round, and staring full in the face of Edmund, declared he was a very handsome fellow, and then gaily asked whether he was her brother? before he could reply to this *polite* query, her notice was attracted by Charlotte, on whose beauty she bestowed a similar compliment, adding, in a tone of admiration, "such a pair, at such a distance from dear St. James's,—why now, don't you come to London?

London?

London?—such shapes—such figures—with a little cultivation, a little twist of the ton, would—but L—d how exquisitely warm I am,”—this last observation she accompanied by uncasing herself from the weighty incumbrance of a horse-man’s great coat, and all the other *etceteras* of modern travelling, and appeared the female so genuine—that nothing but that little accomplishment called *modesty* was wanting, to put her on an equality with Charlotte herself.

Edmund, now guessing who his visitor was, advanced to salute her, which she returned with a *smack*, which brought the blood instantaneously into the cheeks of Charlotte, and threw the youth himself
into

into a temporary embarrassment; he enquired after the health of his brother, and whether he might expect the pleasure of his company. Her Ladyship was by this time too much engaged to reply to these questions, she had again turned to the mirror, and was shocked beyond measure at the idea of being without her maid, "hark ye, my dear," cried she, addressing herself to Charlotte, without turning round, "do you understand any thing of *wigs*." "Wigs! your Ladyship,"—repeated Charlotte in a note of surprise.

"*Wigs*, ey child!—mine is most terribly out of *sorts*." So intirely recluse had Charlotte lived, that this was the first mention she had heard of such an elegant female

female decoration—to satisfy her doubts, Lady Southby pulled her's off. “Nothing on my honor!” added she, “is so delightfully becoming—but what of that?—the invention is my own, and like most other inventions of genius—sprang from necessity. You must know, that some time ago, *cropping* was all the go, and I sacrificed one of the best heads of hair in the world to bring it about. One day, Southby came into my dressing room, and observing *Stanton* turning the little remnant I had left, took the irons:—but as the *creature* never does any thing like any body else, he burned my neck in the most frightful manner imaginable; next night was my rout—but what of that?—I sent for an ingenious artist, and concealed the scar with

with the flowing ringlets of a wig. The men were in raptures, and the ladies bit their lips with envy, but what of that?—the *thing* was new; it was charming, and it became the rage. Wigs of all descriptions were sported; and many, not content with wearing the borrowed ringlets of others, had even their own native ones converted into a *scratch*."

A servant now entering, told Edmund that Lord Southby was below. Charlotte started and grew pale, and the man officiously adding that it was Lord Southby that had used Miss Southby ill. Edmund turned and saw his sister's situation. Speak Charlotte! Was it my brother that frightened you? but that is impossible—he could

could not—by heaven! he durst not do it. The blood rushed into his cheeks and fled from them alternately as he waited the reply of his sister. Unused to disguise the truth, or to refuse a compliance with the commands of a brother so beloved, she candidly confessed the leading circumstances, only concealing those parts which her nice sense of modesty required; far from quieting the agitation of Edmund, this unstudied disclosure roused all his passions, fury flashed in his countenance, he violently traversed the apartment, keeping his eyes fixt on a sword that had been carelessly laid on the top of his bureau. Charlotte was terrified at this ardent emotion; but as for Lady Southby, she burst into a fit of laughter, declaring that she had
never

never seen better acting in all her life. "Come hither child" said she, to Charlotte, "and can you be quite such a novice as to be alarmed at a little common gallantry. On my honor! I would not give a pin for a man that had not a spirit in that way; besides, child, if his lordship meant any thing serious, I am the person injured, but thank heaven, I am too well acquainted with the world to take umbrage at such a trifle. And as for you, my tragedy-turned brother," she cried, placing herself so as to shorten his walk, "all this is mighty well in theory, but in practice there is not a female in the kingdom that would not pardon an attack of this nature, sooner than forgive the affront of no attack at all!"

There

There is a keenness in ridicule that strikes deeper than the most pointed advice or admonition ; ridicule too, coming from one so beautiful ; so near in affinity ; and so much in herself interested, failed not in its effect ; he was even ashamed of his transports, and on the entry of his brother, received him with real affection. Sir Samuel Belford, who accompanied the vanquished nobleman, felt it his duty to interfere in this delicate business : and Lady Southby again introducing the subject of *wigs*, the whole died in silence and apparent reciprocal forgiveness.

Lady Southby, who hated melancholy, strove to banish its influences from her present residence, parties were formed, and
gaiety

gaiety prevailed, nor did the unfortunate Clarissa fail in her endeavours to augment the good humour of the family: received in the most sympathetic manner by Charlotte.; her sorrow seemed to subside, and her manners to assume a polish beyond what might have been expected. Lady Southby treated her as a friend, and all but the baronet gave implicit credit to the story of her unhappiness. Why—he who, on every occasion, had shewn symptoms of genuine compassion, should, in this one instance, deviate from the general plan will be explained, as has before been said, hereafter, to the reader's satisfaction.

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CHAP. XII.

Some plausible remarks, with some of their consequences.

THE interruption which Edmund had met with, by the foregoing circumstances, in writing to his friend Fairfax, was done away ; the first leisure moment he could command from the officious attention of his new visitants ; his letter was now lengthened by a simple detail of occurrences which, in the simplicity of his heart, he imagined would be gratifying to his friend. This letter was dispatched by a

special messenger, with that celerity which its author imagined due to its import. Tho' the captain was highly gratified by the receipt of the very liberal accompaniment, which indeed more than answered his expectations, the unsuspecting candour with which the writer communicated the domestic changes that had taken place, gave an alarm to that foresight, which is the constant attendant on a bad heart, how far this alarm operated, may be conceived by the reader, from a perusal of the following epistle, which he dispatched by the same messenger.

“ My heart, my dear friend, is full—yet I will not hurt the delicacy of your feelings by my thanks ; they are, I trust, registered elsewhere.—

elsewhere.—And that benign Power, who views the actions of mankind with infallible precision, will give to the character a never fading impression.

“I will soon join your society at Wellford Lodge, and trust to find the cheerful deity, that wont to preside there, again scattering those particles that insure tranquility. I could wish in the mean time to congratulate you on those new acquisitions to your family which you so flatteringly describe, did not, perhaps, a foolish scrupulosity for your real comfort, interfere: it is the just privilege of friendship, to watch o’er the conduct of its object, and it is also the incumbent duty of this friendship, to use such privilege without restraint or ceremony.

ceremony. First, then, my dear Edmund, I do not like your admired Sir Samuel Belford, nor can I imagine you such a dupe to his boasted science, as to give implicit credit to the well arranged features of a countenance, without a concordance of action and a candid openness of behaviour; believe me, that the account given of himself is totally irreconcilable to that common spring that actuates the movement of mankind; the days of chivalry are past, and in this age, when we find a man leaving the substantial comforts of a home, and the pleasures to be derived from a rational neighbourhood, for the mere chimerical blessings arising from discomfort and inconvenience, we ought to look on him, at best, to be one of those slaves to
whim

whim or self opinion, who, under the usurped denomination of sentimental travellers, give a false cast to their own native disposition, and from caprice, or a real weakness of intellect, connect notions the most opposite, and allowing the internal sense to be overpowered by external objects ; the most insignificant occurrence is formed into a source of sympathy, and a block or a stone turned into objects of feeling and sensibility. Still, Edmund, happy will I be to find these observations altogether inapplicable to the baronet, and that my solicitude to prevent imposition has outrun my discernment ; I will also rejoice to find that his interposition in that unhappy transaction between Charlotte and Lord Southby, was the sole effect of chance,

aided by a spontaneous pressure of *uninterested* bravery; and, on such conviction, do I with you join in the warmest testimony of thanks—but your sister, my friend, is beautiful, and formed for love; and if Sir Samuel adds *intrigue* to the list of his singularities—look to it,—imagine not, however, that I wish to raise your suspicion; but such romantic eccentricities are so uncommon, that they carry with them a doubt of their being altogether unintentional.

“Your story of Clarissa beguiled me of a tear, yet what is contained in the story, that a little observation will not furnish us with a similitude? She has lost the man of her heart;—true but where, let me ask,
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is the female, arrived at the age of a woman, that has not encountered the stings of real or imaginary disappointment? a little experience in these matters will convince us, that nothing so easily varies its object as *love*, or that the most boasted constancy, the easiest admits the force of a secondary flame!—doubt not then but that this same love-sick maiden, convinced of the fruitlessness of grief, will, in due time, transfer the love she at present cherishes for the memory of her soldier, to some other equally worthy admirer.”

“ These truizms you, my friend, ought to apply to your own immediate uneasiness; and hesitate not to believe that your passion for the amiable Charlotte has not

perpetually excluded the happiness of a mutual flame. Your love for this girl has merely gained its present ascendancy from opposition ; for had she still continued the plain Charlotte, the orphan of a mother's charity ; still would she have appeared an object of simple admiration ; it was, be assured, the knowledge of what she really is, that engendered the transporting idea of what she might have been :—and this idea gaining strength from the impossibility of its accomplishment, formed a kind of systematic regret, which, uniting itself with the native softness of your disposition, has produced that fund of uneasiness you so feelingly pourtray.

“ To undermine and blow up, (to use the technical expressions of our profession)

this

this *magazine* of disquiet, nothing is wanting but resolution;—look around you, and how easy it will be to find a lady, no-wise inferior to your *sister*, who unfettered by such an *incestuous* obstacle, will meet with transport, that warmth of affection so congenial to your own susceptibility of heart, and, by a delicate return of love, ensure you permanent tranquillity. The trial is at least praise-worthy, and depend upon it, not impracticable; such a resolution, sanctioned by reason, will become strengthened by time; and Charlotte will gradually descend to that degree of adoration which her affinity warrants. Then Edmund you will thank the officiousness of that friendship that thus pointed out the

primary path to happiness, however harsh and familiar it may now appear.

“The conduct of Lord Southby is little to be wondered at, considering the nature of his connections and pursuits. I have long known his lordship, and know that it is not the strict observance of virtue, that will stop the farther attempts of his licentious appetite. I tremble, therefore, for Charlotte, environed as she is by the intemperate passion of your brother, and, by what is infinitely more dangerous, a fatal *propensity* for the baronet, if such, as it is but too probable is the case, exists. As to her *tender* sentiments for yourself,—if indeed, interest aside, they ever might be
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denominated *tender*, her own good sense will now point out their futility,—above all, be thou Edmund aware of that hypocritical shew of tenderness, which if not guarded against, may ultimately end in ruin and contrition.

Your's ever, sincerely,

H. FAIRFAX."

The true motive of this epistle may be easily ascertained, false in friendship as the Captain was himself, he dreaded to have an associate in the esteem of Edmund, he dreaded more that the affections of Charlotte might be previously engaged to his own application, and he considered the jealousy of the youth once kindled, sufficient to obviate his fears; to work on this

jealousy, therefore, was his aim, and the ambiguous manner in which he worded his letter, went farther than could the most direct accusation.—The unsuspecting Edmund perused it with a painful astonishment, but it was an astonishment mingled with the warmest gratitude,—his sister, who happened to be present, saw his emotion, she observed him repeatedly read over the letter with an encreasing wildness of demeanour, and she saw him hastily put the letter into his pocket, and quit the room, without taking the least notice of her being present.—A behaviour so unkind, and so unlike the usual politeness of her brother alarmed her, she flew after him, and overtook him, as he rapidly pursued the path that led into the favorite retreat of Lady Wellford.

“ Mr.

“ Mr. Southby,” said she with a voice scarcely articulate, “ I hope you will pardon my officious freedom—I have no right to interrupt you—but if the overflowing of a heart full of gratitude”——Edmund turned short, and taking her by the hand, “ Mr. *Southby*, said’st thou, Charlotte,” exclaimed he, interrupting her, and mellowing his voice with particular softness, —“so formal, yet so humble; why so unusual a contrast, and why does Charlotte entertain a doubt, that any action of her’s should by me be termed an intrusion?”

“ Something unfortunate has occurred, my brother,” said Charlotte, “ and my anxiety to know the cause has hurried me thus to take a liberty so unbecoming, and
to

to solicit a confidence of which I am altogether unworthy."

"You are worthy of every confidence, Charlotte; yet," cried he, with hesitation, "there are circumstances that frequently occur in the journey through life, that even such worth and fidelity as your's ought not to participate,—this letter is of this description, the sensations it has communicated, could not be softened by a disclosure of its contents, were I so cruel as to make the experiment."

"The mind," said Charlotte, "is eased by unburthening it self of those secrets that give it pain, and altho' any advice of mine would be too insignificant to administer

nister comfort, yet might a disclosure lessen the poignancy of your uneasiness, and at least confer on me the satisfaction of sharing in the trouble of one, whom I—*esteem* so much.”

Charlotte faltered, as she pronounced the word *esteem*; it seemed the mere substitute of a term more near to her heart, and a tear, which had quivered in her eye through the sentence, now fell on the hand of her brother, whose tenderness awakened by the sympathetic drop, his circumspection fled—he caught her in his arms, and stifling on her bosom a sob that tried to force its way, faintly uttered—“O Charlotte! this is but the foretaste of that excess of misery that awaits us!”

“ *Excess*

“ *Excess of misery !*” repeated his sister, emphatically, “ surely—surely Edmund, we have done nothing to warrant a catastrophe so dreadful.”

That sentence in the letter of Fairfax, which so maliciously hinted at the *incestuous* connection between them, was deeper engraved on the memory of Edmund, than was every other insinuation, and the slightest touch gave it energy,—he quitted the animating hold, and in a tone of sadness, exclaimed, that they must part.

“ And is this the terrible calamity that threatens us,” demanded Charlotte, assuming a gaiety of accent, and smiling through the agony that dimmed her features ;

“ sure,

“sure, brother, we wanted no sooth-sayer to point out the propriety of this, nor the injunctions of a *friend*, to give stability to the step.”

“But we want fortitude, Charlotte,” cried her brother, quickly, “and however light the transaction may appear in your consideration, on my soul! to me the determination is dreadful. To part, Charlotte, simply as a word, is nothing—but to separate for ever—to bid a last adieu to all that is dear to us, and step at once from happiness to its extreme opposite, without being able to drink of that oblivion which can only palliate absence, is to me intolerable,—without the company of Charlotte, the world will be a desolated wild, in which,
wandering

wandering o'er the thorny path of disappointment, my imagination will continually dwell on former happiness, on hours of bliss—past, never—never to return, unless, perhaps, the fear-formed phantom of my sister's danger, stops the current of recollection, and holds up the gloomy picture of that ruin and misery, that may await your then unprotected innocence,—yet let me not think of this, kind heaven! there is anguish unsupportable in the very idea, tho' how little less is the acrimony of my forebodings, when probability points out, that in these moments of my misery, Charlotte will be happy—in the arms of another,—happy—whilst Edmund is forgot, even then I will not complain of your inconstancy—providence has marked out
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the path, and its unalterable decrees will guide you on it, with submission will I then bend to the trial, and, without a murmur, drop into that last bed, prepared by a broken heart, but a heart, my sister, ever constant and unalterable.—My head burns,” continued he, wildly, putting his hand to his forehead, and fixing his eyes with languid inattention on the ground, “and were I to indulge this image of approaching wretchedness, my brain would turn, and—but, I might then be insensible of misery.”

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

*Unsubstantial Surmises, oft' times stronger
than positive Facts.*

POOR Charlotte stood motionless, the unusual agitation of her brother's manner, and the melancholy pathos with which he accompanied his words, shook her pretended firmness, and filled her bosom with a mixture of terror and compassion; tears, which on moments of less tribulation, seasonably soften down the fury of the passions, and ease the affected spirits, now refused to flow,—a deep silence ensued—
which

which Edmund interpreting in a sense opposite to its real significance, turned from her, and walked into the thickest part of the shrubbery; whilst his sister, sinking on the ground, became for some minutes wrapt in insensibility.

Edmund threw himself on a seat—the transport of love that had driven reason from its throne, and even had shaken the delicate fibres of the brain, from their wonted occupation, gradually subsided—he again unfolded the letter, he perused it more attentively, but without losing any of that acrimony of thought first imbibed from its contents; superior as his mind had hitherto been to the passion of jealousy, a tincture of it had now entered his bosom,
which

which seemed at once to account for the calm and apparent indifference with which Charlotte had received the information of their parting. The conduct of his sister, blameless as it was in every respect in his opinion, till this moment, attacked now by the deep insinuations of Fairfax, appeared covered with a dark shade of suspicion, and this ungainly change, he imputed to the endeavours of his visitor Sir Samuel Belford—he reflected on the uniform politeness of this gentleman to his sister, the extraordinary warmth of his expressions in her favour, whilst his attention seemed evidently engaged in rooting up the passion that wrung his own bosom, and his continuance at Wellford Lodge without any declared motive—he, in the wildness
of

of his imagination, saw many other circumstances of doubt pass before him, particularly a kind of intimacy that had taken place suddenly between the baronet and his female visitor, contrary to the express declarations of the gentleman himself, who had made no scruple to say, that her behaviour and her story were at strange variance, and that his physiological observations made but little in her favor.—The idea of his being imposed on increased his anger, and threatend to dispossess him of that mildness of temper, which had hitherto rendered him so truly amiable.

This truly unpleasant contemplation was interrupted by the appearance of Lord Southby, who having just escaped from
the

the consequence of a little altercation, *à la matrimonial*, (in which Lady Southby, as was usual on similar occasions, would have carried her point, by the expressive application of her fair hand to the hearing organ of her help-mate), was just in that happy turn of temper, calculated to vex and irritate the temper of the first he met with.

“How, now! Edmund,” cried he, flapping his brother on the shoulder, “still harping on the melancholy instrument of discontent, and endeavouring, like the fussy philosopher of old, whose name by the bye, I have forgot, to study the language of birds, that the rooks and daws, and you may croak in disfinal consonance.

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—Come, come, you must to London, where groves, and trees, and shades, and streams that murmur echoes to the strains of love sick maidens, will be transformed into every thing animating, gay and delightful.”

“ You have your amusements, and I have mine, brother;” replied Edmund, with a sigh, “ the solitary simplicity of situation is by long habitude congenial to my disposition,—the pleasures of the fashionable world would, therefore, be lost on me, and whilst your giddy round of high seasoned entertainments past before me, I could only partake of them with a palled appetite, because my thoughts would be elsewhere.”

“ That be d—n’d !” exclaimed Southby, with a happy cadence which took away the vulgarity of the exclamation, “ do you now flatter yourself, that I can *take this in*, or imagine that your imperious modesty is not a mere mask under which you may *sin* with impunity—are we not of the same materials composed ?”

“ But our education has been widely different,” answered Edmund.

“ Granted ;” cried his Lordship, with a twist of self-importance, “ my education has indeed been conducted on the liberal principle of gentility.—I have always despised books,—yet I believe few understand things better.”—

“ Few

“ Few understand things worse;” observed Lady Southby, who that moment joined the party, accompanied by the baronet and Clarissa, to whom her Ladyship had, as she expressed it, taken a *mighty* liking, for reasons which may be explained hereafter.—Southby returned a look, in which even the penetration of Sir Samuel could not distinguish the vestige of gratitude, for being thus seasonably set right, and changing the subject, asked whether she still persisted in her intention?—“ Most assuredly my love,” replied she, “ you see I am equipt;” so saying, she laid a whip she held in her hand pretty smartly across the shoulders of her Lord, and pulling off her hat with the hand that returned from this kind office, with the other exposed a

leg, the lower extremity of which was enclosed in a half-boot so nicely made, as not to conceal the exquisite shape of the member.—“The horses are gone round to the gate,” continued her Ladyship, “and I long to be mounted.”

“No doubt of it,” observed the husband, with an emphasis:—Sir Samuel smiled—Lady Southby took him under the arm, and with the familiar appellation of *saucy wretch*,—walked on.

The two brothers remained some time looking after them, “I shall lose fifty guineas by this d—n’d engagement,” said Southby, “for altho’ Nan is one of the first equestrians in the kingdom, I doubt
her

her ability to cope with Belford; we both are wonderfully beholden to him," added he, with a sneer, which called the blood into the face of Edmund, "but *apropos*—of the business we were talking of.—In the polishing of my manners, and in giving me a cast of superior openness, I had the example of my father before me, who is allowed by all to be the *sort*—devilish keen—and up to every thing—I assure you brother, our father is still a fellow of mettle, and will be proud to introduce such a promising *lad* as you are, to some of our first rate keepers of *it up*, where the genius of high life will hover o'er you, and dissipating those d—n'd sanctified traits of a misplaced maternal education, hold you forth in those lively colours of extravagance, which ought

to distinguish the man of spirit and fortune;—there, brother, all the voluptuous variety of love.”

Edmund interrupted him, by turning away in disgust.

“ So,” cried his Lordship, catching the meaning, “ you would persuade me that *love* forms no portion of the ingredients that compose your system.”

“ Love and sensuality are distinct passions,” replied Edmund.—“ Yet always end in an agreeable junction,” rejoined the Peer, “ else of all other passions, love is the weakest; look ye, brother, with all your hypocritical cant, I believe you to be a d—lish queer fellow and fly withall—
there

there now—by way of specimen—is Charlotte, who, out of pure and disinterested affection, you have styled *sister*—pray! what does your morality say to her?”

“Every thing that is tender and consolatory,” answered the other; “and I think of her as I do of an angel,—and”—

“Do to her as to a woman;” added the elder, archly.

“I do not understand your raillery;” said Edmund.

“But you understand one another,” cried his brother, “and that is sufficient, at least to me it is so—as for some other

people, they may judge for themselves,—he laid particular stress on the words, *some other people*, and accompanied them with a significance of gesture, which forcibly attracted the curiosity of Edmund,—“I don’t like this fellow, ’pon my honor!” continued his Lordship, “yet what the plague have I to do with other people’s business?”

“I cannot mistake the meaning of allusion,” cried Edmund, in an unusual emotion, “tho’ I dare not admit the justice of the application—my opinion of my sister’s virtue is too long established, to admit a real doubt, and I think the baronet possesses an integrity and honor, above the attack of mere suspicion.”

“D—n

“D—n his honor,” exclaimed Southby, what, for heaven’s sake, has his *honor* to do in a bargain with the sex? ’pon *my* honor! I do not recollect an instance on the records of fashion, where a man ever succeeded with a woman on the rigid principle of honor—No, no, in theory it is pretty well, but in practice at least impolitic, if not impossible—nay, the dear rogues themselves know this same virtue is but nominal, and accordingly seldom include it in a treaty now a days. There, for instance, is my *Gipsey Nan*, who, I believe, never put the smallest confidence in my honor, finds my inclination perfectly sufficient to compose the article of comfort; and here again is Charlotte, with all her simplicity and innocence, I’ll engage for it,

builds more on your fondness, than on your honor or integrity—as to her dependence on our friend, the baronet, it must be but trifling, when we consider the motive is only pleasure.”

“Why do ye torture me with such surmises?” cried Edmund, grasping the hand of his brother in violent agitation, “Charlotte”—“is just like other women,” interrupted Southby, “fickle, changeable and whimsical,—here comes one in proof of the assertion.”

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

The Race terminated politely, with something which may occasion a Doubt in the Reader.

THEY had arrived at a part of the garden which commanded a view of the adjacent park, and could plainly perceive the nature of the amusement and engagement of Lady Southby. It was a race in which no less dexterity than exertion was displayed, and in which her Ladyship came in victorious, not indeed from the superior fleetness of her quadruped, tho' the first

in the stud of her brother, but owing to the truly polite conduct of her opponent, who rather chusing to lose the bet, than expose her to the mortification of losing, contrived to curb his horse, whilst apparently he used every means to encrease his speed.

Her Ladyship highly delighted with her success, received the congratulations of her Lord with dignified indifference, observing, as she pocketed the deposited wager, that it was exactly the sum requisite to liquidate her debt to Sir Timothy Mortimer, which had given her so much vexation.—Southby, with some dryness, replied to this observation, that this was then the tenth time he had known her possessed of a sum equal to that purpose, most of which had cost him
some

some trouble to raise, yet stood the debt as usual.

“What of all that?” cried Lady Southby, “more urgent cases intervened; perhaps this may fly in the same manner; if it does—why my dear Southby must make an apology.”

“If I do, I’ll be d—n’d!” exclaimed the husband.

“And if you dont, you will be in the same predicament, my love,” said her Ladyship, coolly,—“but what of all that? come Sir Samuel—why, where the deuce is the *fellow* gone to?” The question was a natural one enough, for the baronet was
not

not to be seen. Lady Southby had a temper not to be ruffled by such minute disappointments.—She took her confidant under the arm, and immediately introducing the topic of dress, in the article of which she had determined to make a material change on her return to town—majestically returned to the Lodge.

Lord Southby was rather too much used to what he expressively styled, "*Nan's impudence*," to be anywise affected with this trifling specimen, and he resumed the previous subject, to which indeed the whole attention of his brother had remained riveted.

"My

“ My valet, Larkins, whom I, for mere pastime, have employed in this business,” said his Lordship, “ has been *down* on them, and his intelligence”——

“ Ah! my lord,” interrupted his brother, “ I am afraid but little confidence can be placed on such information; a spy, is at best, a despicable character, but when duty and interest both unite to encourage the informer, fabrication is too often substituted for truth, and ingenuity supplies what opportunity fails to furnish.”

“ In general this may be the case,” said Southby, “ but my rascal is a particular exception, and so often have I put his veracity to the test, that d—n me, if
I would

I would not take his bare assertion, in preference to the affidavit of my own father.—He is my right hand as it were,—he procures me my girls—fathers their children; and even marries the mothers when necessity urges.—He once saved my life, when a son of a —— of a carman, overturned my curriole in Thames-street.—Nay, it is but a few weeks ago, that he cracked the skull of a scoundrel, who threatened me, because his sister and your humble servant, had finished a bargain, in which neither the church, nor him, as a relation, had been consulted; in short, when any thing is to be done that requires delicacy, secrecy or dispatch, Larkins is the man.”

Edmund

Edmund sickened at an encomium which, though pronounced with a rapidity of utterance, which testified the sincerity of the speaker, was very far from raising this faithful domestic in his opinion; on the contrary, the very idea that such a wretch existed, and met with encouragement, filled him with apathy and horror. The suspicion previously raised, suppressed however such emotions, and gave curiosity a sufficient prevalence to keep him silent whilst his brother proceeded.

“ In most cases of intrigue, as well as treason,” said his Lordship, with very unusual solemnity, “ constructive evidence is substituted in lieu of positive facts, and by forming a chain of concurring circumstances,

stances, conviction is made as certain as if substantiated by indubitable proof. Of this kind, therefore, is the nature of the evidence now before us. And first then, you are to know, that the story of Clarissa, by which by the bye, you have been egregiously imposed on, is a *hum*.—She is no more what she has represented herself to be, than I am a bishop.—What the d—l has this to do with Charlotte? you may demand.—I answer, every thing; for if she is not what she seems; it follows, that she has put on the disguise to serve some undisclosed purpose; in which Charlotte is ultimately interested;—that Clarissa is not what she seems is evident; Larkins has found out that her hair is naturally fair, and only acquires that *carrotty* tint,

tint, from a certain wash.—Her complexion too derives its fallowness from a similar composition, and in fact her whole appearance is formed by an artful process. Now, though it is well known, that the sex endeavour in general to heighten their native loveliness, by the assistance of art, the deuce a female, since the days that good madam Eve set agoing the fashions of the earth, ever wittingly and willingly used art, to conceal the charms of a countenance without a powerful incitement,—but to put this matter beyond a doubt, and to prove that some d—n'd conspiracy is on foot.—Here is a written voucher—the true copy of a letter, or rather the fragment of one, picked up by my industrious valet, in the very bed room
of

of this lady, the original of which he was obliged to re-place, to prevent suspicion :—

“ Having succeeded thus far, propitiously, I intend setting out in the course of a few weeks for Wellford Lodge, in full assurance of a favourable termination of my scheme ; I conjure you then, my Clarissa, as you love me, and hope a continuance of that life of independence, so long enjoyed by us both, strictly to adhere to what I have enjoined, and fail not.” Farther this paper saith not, but conjecture easily furnishes the remainder.—Mark me, Edmund, this fragment would have said, if not so cursedly mutilated,—“ and fail not, as you desire to continue in my good
graces,

graces, to convey yourself to the said mansion, in the manner pointed out, so that our practices on Mr. Southby thrive, and my triumph over the virtue of Charlotte be complete." This addition is at least probable, when the strange manner of their introduction to you, and the seeming understanding between the parties is considered. It was but yesterday that they were shut up a full hour together, and as they came out of the room, Larkins, who had placed himself conveniently for the purpose, heard Sir Samuel say,—“My dear madam, we must be more circumspect, or our scheme may still be discovered.” Larkins afterwards watched the Baronet to the parlour, where Charlotte was seated, and through the
key-hole

key-hole saw him, during conversation, frequently take the hand of the lady, and once press it in rapture to his lips, followed by the exclamation. "By heaven! I am serious."—And again—"My dear girl, credit not that, for your brother is the last person in the world to be trusted with a secret so nearly concerned with his own happiness." My valet saw not the conclusion of this *tête-à-tête*, which, no doubt, was tender enough,—being forced to quit his station on the approach of another servant.—But what do we talk of hearsay matters? I myself have seen this same Sir Samuel Belford; this reader of other people's inward sentiments; hang over the chair of Charlotte; whilst she, languid, reclining, and with the big drops
of

of sensibility standing in each orb,—read, with every symptom of satisfaction, some melancholy passage, pointed out by her subtle auditor,—does he not anticipate her wishes in the most trivial matters,—is he not all levity and cheerfulness when she is pleased to be playful,—all sadness and gloom when she but looks out of humour? To what then can all this tend, if not to steal clandestinely into her affections? You talk of his honor, brother, but if by this you mean that his affections turn to matrimony, I deny the truth of the conclusion; has he not, even in presence of Charlotte, often treated the idea of marriage with ridicule, and were his intentions even opposed to such irony, doth not his rank, fortune, and independence

dence well warrant an open and manly disclosure, were his intentions upright?"

Here his Lordship paused, just to observe the effect his argument made on the passions of his brother—he had seldom, even in his own opinion, expressed himself so fluently, nor ever had felt himself so much interested; not that this anxiety was occasioned by a sense of family honor, for the peace of Edmund, or safety of his sister, but from a motive at once selfish and inhuman, for in despite of the indifference he expressed to his brother, towards the lovely girl, - he felt for her a passion, which, though neither founded on the purity of genuine love, nor confined within the limits of prudence, yet burnt
with

with a fierceness, that threatened to be extinguished only by the destruction of its object.—This had, of consequence, stirred up a kind of jealousy, which had been the real prompter to the discoveries he had made, at the same time that it pointed out the Baronet and his brother as rivals equally formidable, and made him ground his hopes of success on their opposition to one another,—the virtue and prudence of the lady being by him considered as opponents from which he had little to apprehend, and her affections a trifle equally weak and insignificant:—even the bar of relationship, which ought to have chilled the very idea of such a pursuit, and presented an obstacle at whose appearance nature should have shrunk back into that

path which to stray from is diametrically opposite to its own laws,—gave no check to the wild depravity of his appetite—long habituated to the free exercise of his inclinations, every law seemed only a rude restriction, which to surmount was a merit equally just and satisfactory.

Poor Edmund, who had never viewed the transactions of mankind through any other medium than truth, saw neither into the intentions of his brother, nor doubted the veracity of what had been advanced; on the contrary, the insinuations conveyed in the letter of Fairfax, linked with his recent observations, seemed to give the whole a credible appearance, and conveyed those sensations to his bosom which one sensible
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of his own purity feels when he perceives the ruin of all he holds dear occasioned by simplicity or misconduct.

A conclusion drawn from reasons, carrying with them at least an air of probability, furnished but little inclination to excite a farther discussion, and his brother having already exhausted the whole of his patience, and not a small *quantum* of his erudition, the subject would here, for the present, have dropt, had not the valet of Lord Southby presented him with a letter which, by conveyance of the post, had arrived at the Lodge a few minutes prior.—His Lordship opened this letter, and although, as he expressed it, there was something so d—n'd stupid and low in the ex-

rice of reading, that none but the veriest plebeian ought to submit to—he broke the seal, and proceeded to discuss the contents in an audible and rather appropriate voice, dashing in his own remarks, by way of parenthesis, as he went on.

“ A friend to Lord Southby begs to enquire why he is absent from London at so critical a period?——(‘ True’ said he, with a shrug, ‘ what have I to do in the *North* when I should be in the *South*? particularly when it is known that no reason can be assigned for so imprudent a conduct’).——Does his Lordship imagine that no improper advantage will be taken of this absence, on the issue of his depending bets, or that the losing of an opportunity

nity to extricate himself from engagements, in themselves absurd and preposterous, is of no kind of import?—nor can it be acting in the true spirit of gallantry to leave a certain female, resident not above one hundred miles from Fitzroy Square, and for whose *virtues* his Lordship has professed such high admiration, to the mercy of another, and in all appearance a more *warm* and spirited admirer; the same friend—(‘*Friend* and familiar both, ’pon my reputation!’ said he, ‘and seems to be *up* to a *thing* or two.’)—would just hint, that unless a speedy and effectual interference takes place, a title, more conspicuous than flattering, will be conferred on his Lordship, as the unwieldy *brunette* of Cleveland Street, is so near possessing the

power of dubbing some one of her friends a *parent*, that, no doubt, offers of *non-acceptance* will be liberally made by some gentlemen of equal, perhaps, superior pretensions.

“ It would be easy to enumerate many more cogent reasons to induce a speedy return to town, but a delicacy prevents a needless irritation of the feelings, when it is presumed that Lord Southby cannot hesitate in determining between the propriety of flying to prevent mischief, and remaining in a place, where, could he open his eyes to truth, he would perceive, that he is only the butt of ridicule, and jack-pudding to the society in which he forms a part.

(“ *Jack*

(‘*Jack-pudding*,’ repeated he with a correspondent grimace.

- ‘ Must I perform the pranks of Sylvian ape,
- ‘ In mountain forest caught ?
- ‘ Death rock me asleep,—abridge my doleful days,
- ‘ Have we not——’

He finished the quotation by an arch look, glanced at his brother.)

“His *foolish* (‘call you this flattery?’) attempt on the virtue of his own sister, might, indeed, in the simplicity of his brother’s heart (‘now Edmund, ’tis your turn to be hoaxed by this d—n’d civil friend of ours’)—*simplicity*—(‘mind that’) of his brother’s heart have met a ready forgiveness, and whilst he, surrounded as he is by the gloomy atmosphere of religion

and morality, tastes the sweets exhaled from the balmy lips of so near a female relative : (' by the dignity of my expected peerage, the rascal begins to write rationally,' quoth Southby,) he cannot with propriety accuse the back-slidings of a brother ; but surely, Lord Southby has seen enough of the world to know, how little welcome a guest he must be, when the soft ear of his fair hostess, is open to the poisoned arguments of a successful rival,—who, to the disgrace of the family, and to the eternal shame of the *pusillanimous* master thereof.

Edmund had, hitherto, paid but a vacant kind of attention to the contents of this curious epistle, but roused by this unqualified

qualified epithet, which lost nothing of its purport from the pronunciation of his brother, he turned eagerly to listen.—

“*Pusillanimous* master thereof,”—

(‘Prithee, mark Edmund; ’tis a sensible fellow, egad!’)—under the simple mask of friendship, has established a footing, triumphed o’er unsuspecting innocence, and under the nose of those, whom the ties of nature has constituted protectors to the object of his passion, revels in the voluptuous enjoyment of illicit gratification.

“ ’Tis false!” exclaimed Edmund, furiously snatching the letter, and trampling it under his feet, “ it is false, by heaven! purer and more chaste is Charlotte than was the mother of the miscreant, who thus presumes to vilify her character.”

“ Good ;” said Southby, “ and uttered with all the fervor of a jealous lover.”

“ Curfed illusion !” exclaimed Edmund, with the blood deferting his cheeks, “ no, I am not a *jealous lover*, fuch a term is inapplicable to my fentiments—heaven and earth ! is fhe not my fifter?—can it then be a lover’s jealousy that tears my bofom?—fuch a conviction would be madnefs—diftraction indeed !”

“ To be fure it would,” obferved his Lordfhip, laughing, and at the fame time picking up the letter, “ but to make an end of this fame paper—

“ Whole horrid image doth unfix my hair,

“ And make my feated heart knock at my ribs,

“ Againft the ufe of nature.”——

His

His brother noticed not this hyperbolical rhapsody, a sudden emotion shook his passions.—“Had such a doubt of Charlotte’s honor arisen,” said he, “before that blasted hour in which I learnt she was my sister, I might have been jealous, for I then loved her with an adoration so pure, that the wind itself that rudely prest her bosom was my rival; but that is now done away,—I own, indeed, I love her still, but it is the chaste love a brother ought to feel for a deserving sister—more than this would be——O incestuous thought!—’tis insupportable.”—He threw himself on the ground, and a cold tremour shook every nerve.

Lord Southby declared, on oath, this to be horrid *flat*, and consequently took immediate advantage of his brother's silence to proceed.

“Illicit gratification, (‘pon my honor! a pretty expression, and signifies,’ added he, ‘that—

‘ Up he rose and donn’d his clothes,
‘ And dapp’d the chamber door,
‘ Let in the maid, that out a maid,
‘ Never departed more.’)

“ When artifice is used with dexterity, the deceived thereby merit at least our pity, but this intrigue, so impudent and flagrant in all its circumstances, renders the party imposed on an abettor to the crime, (‘ meaning you still Edmund!’) nor is the man who coolly countenances such
a deviation

a deviation from common decorum less culpable, more particularly when he tacks a wife to the list of witnesses in this scene of depravity, who, no doubt, profiting by so specious an example, will imbibe notions of purity, that at some future period may add considerably to his lordship's domestic tranquillity.

“ Dated at London, &c. &c.

“ 'Pon my reputation, a mighty sensible admonition !” said Lord Southby, after a pause, “ and were it not that I have a longing desire to see you Edmund, let day light peep into the skull of this mischief making baronet, before my departure,

ture, I would leave your fussy mansion immediately."

Before poor Edmund had collected firmness sufficient to make any reply, Larkins, who had only withdrawn a few paces just to give his master breathing room, now again approached, and in a whisper informed him, that Lady Southby had received a letter by the same post, adding with a look of much significance, that it was franked by Sir Timothy Mortimer.—
"Then, the murder is out," cried Southby, with an unusual squeeze of frowning in his aspect. At no time had he entertained any particular impression of kindness for this truly honorable member of fashionable society, and, in the present irritated
state

state of his thoughts, the sound of his name came to his ear with a double portion of harshness.—His Lordship was, indeed, too well bred a husband to take umbrage at the marked attention paid to his rib, by this said Sir Timothy; or, to shew any apparent uneasiness, when any warm expression escaped the tongue of her Ladyship in favor of so valuable an acquaintance; at the same time, measuring this Gentleman's notions of gallantry by the general tenor of his own, he had concluded it just possible, that something counted unjustifiable, by the nice discriminating court of Doctor's-Commons, either had already, or might actually take place. The idea of this glancing o'er the tablet of his reflection, seemed

seemed to render it just as possible that the epistle he had perused with such painful attention, was the production of the baronet, with the view of drawing himself, and consequently his lady back to the metropolis, a place far better adapted to the nature of social intercourse, than that where literary correspondence was the medium. His lordship was generally governed by such superficial kind of reasoning, and when he strengthened the conclusion by the supposition that no other person was so minutely acquainted with his own, or the secrets of his family, or was likely to descant on them with equal freedom, such conclusion was not altogether vague or unsupported.—Now, as Southby entertained so little personal esteem

esteem for this supposed author, it is not to be expected that a ready compliance with the production just recited was to be expected.—On the contrary, he committed it to the winds, mutilated in a thousand fragments, swearing, at the same time, with great vehemence, that he would not return to town on any account whatever, and if *Nan* was so inclined, “she might go and be——,” substituting, as was his way, a shrug, in lieu of a more explicit expression,—and, in truth, in this last declaration he was sincere, for his care and assiduity, for the good conduct of the wife of his bosom, being at all times lax and whimsical, was doubly so on the present occasion, when the violent partiality he entertained for Charlotte, furnished

nished the sudden gust of ill-will towards her ladyship, with a more than usual portion of acrimony.—Nay, the little consolation that just diverged its influence through the gloomy mists of his real or imaginary trouble, consisted in the idea of Nan's imprudence, leading at last to an eclairsissement that might fairly bring down his own vengeance on the head of her audacious paramour, with something like legal authority.

Though the sagacity of Lord Southby had thus determined the author of this anonymous production, and certified his belief by innumerable affidavits,—veracity will not allow that the character of a young gentleman, who, no doubt, had
fins

sins enough of his own to answer for, should lie under so false an accusation; Sir Timothy Mortimer was a genius not over and above fond of writing, and although the nature of his pursuits sometimes forced him on a task so irksome, we firmly believe, that he would not have undergone the fatigue of fabricating the epistle in question to have saved his *friend* Southby, nor her Ladyship, much as he admired her, from perdition.—No, the composer, was a man deeper versed in the mystery of intrigue, and who rendered trouble and study subservient to his purpose, without counting on their detracting from what is commonly styled satisfaction. It was Captain Fairfax, a man still better acquainted with the private
views

views and secrets of the parties, and rather more interested in the issue of the contrivance. He had dispatched this, as a necessary preface to the plan he proposed to adopt on his arrival at Wellford Lodge, which had for its object the dispersion of those who stood in the way of his views, and the farther fomenting the jealousy of Edmund, nor would it have failed in accomplishing so *honest* an attempt, had not Southby, to whom it was addressed, so unaccountably imputed its fabrication to a wrong person, and in consequence, looked with too much contempt on its import, to be guided by it.—Nay, this wrong construction, so far divided the particles of ill-will, contained in his temper, between the two baronets, that Sir Samuel's
moiey

moieties became far less poignant and irritable. On Edmund the impression too would have been deeper, had the imputations been less acrimonious, the charge made on the virtue of his sister wrung his bosom with a momentary suspicion, but as its insinuation in regard to the impurity of his own connexion was totally destitute of truth, the palpable grossness of the whole the easier outstript the bounds of credibility, and so far defeated its purpose that even the former surmises that had tortured his imagination, were shaken, and a composure of the passions followed as sudden as they had become turbulent. Rather luckily, however, for the cause undertaken by Fairfax, the train of ideas that would have succeeded and re-inflated

sober

sober reflection, were seasonably interrupted by the sudden re-appearance of Sir Samuel Belford, who now stood before them, bearing on his shoulders a venerable old man, whose looks and deportment, bore ample testimony to the necessity, by which this charitable assistance was administered.

The beams of human kindness darted from the eyes of Sir Samuel, as he gently rested his burthen on the ground, and those sensations, which alone spring from a sense of having performed a generous action, had given to his countenance a cast of more than usual placidity.

END OF VOL. I.

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